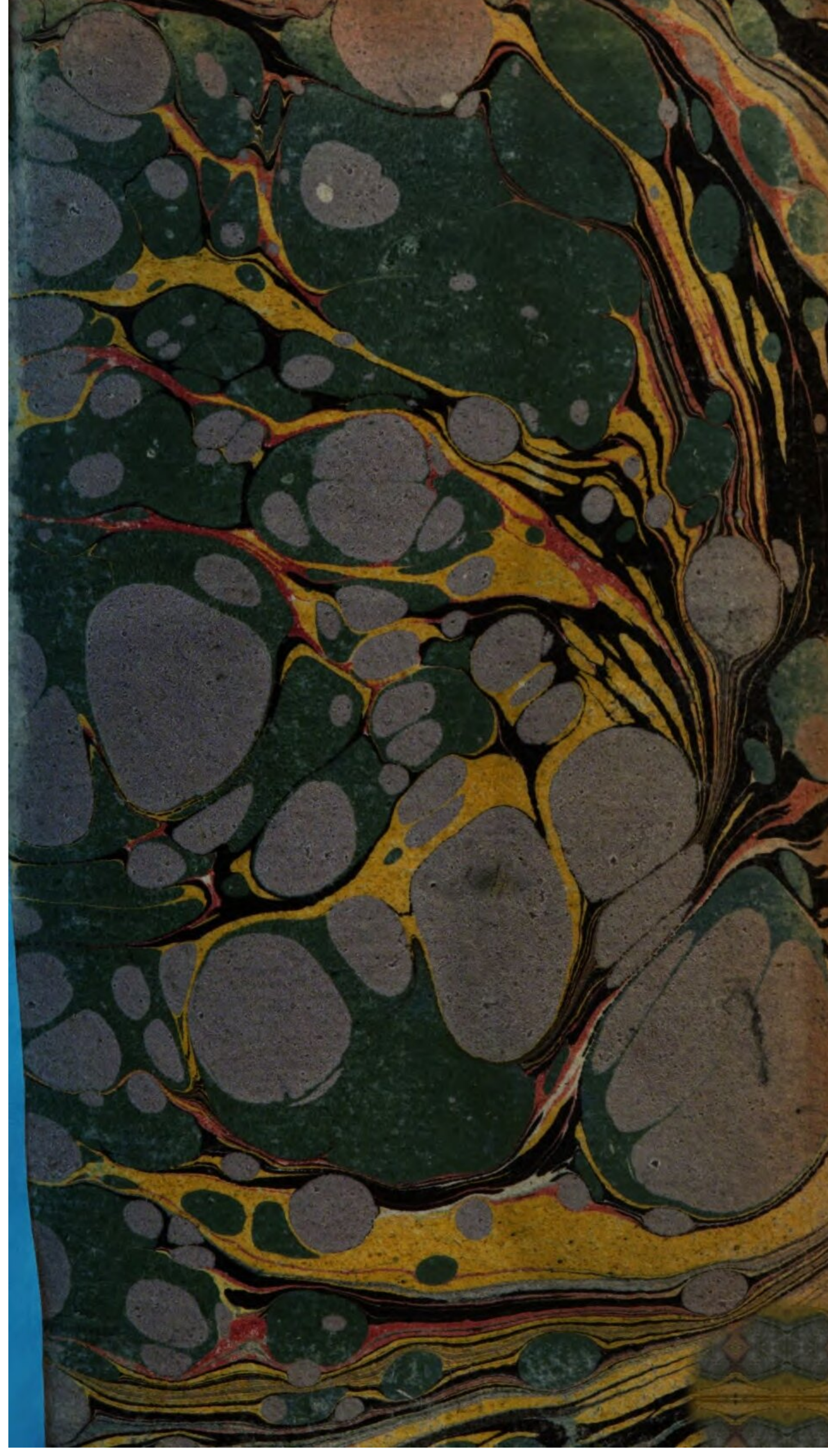




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British Theatre



LeWillepinc.

Corner 20.

MR. POPE as VARANES.

Look there! Ha! is't possible?

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand April 13. 1725.

THEODOSIUS;
OR,
THE FORCE OF LOVE.

A
TRAGEDY,
BY NATHANIEL LEE.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRES-ROYAL,
DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

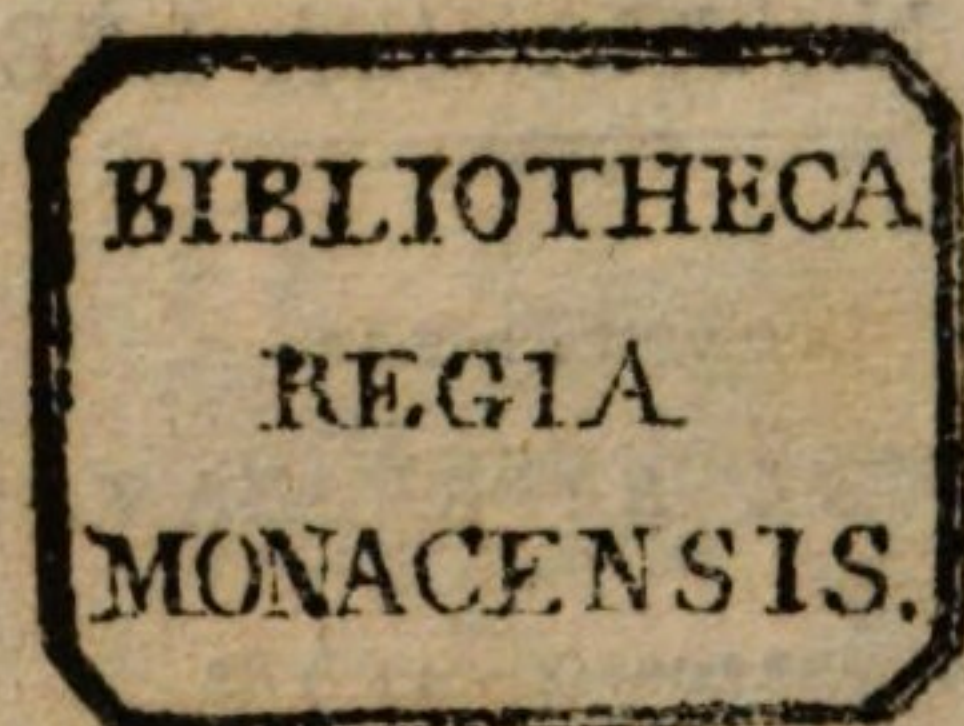
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LONDON :

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MDCXCIII.



TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF RICHMOND.

MADAM,

THE reputation that this play received on the stage, some few errors excepted, was more than I could well hope from so censorious an age; from whom I ask but so much necessary praise as will serve once or twice a-year at most, to gain their good company, and just keep me alive.

There is not now that mankind that was then,
When as the sun and man did seem to strive
(Joint tenants of the world) who should survive;
When if a slow-pac'd star had stol'n away
From the observer's marking he might stay
Two or three hundred years to see't again,
And then make up his observation plain.

DR. DONNE.

For it is impossible, in our limited time, (as I bring his opinion to back my own, who is without comparison, the best writer of the age,) to present our judges a poem half so perfect as we could make it. I must acknowledge, madam, with all humility, I ought to have taken more time and more pains in this tragedy, because it is dedicated to your Grace, who being the best judge, (and therefore can when you

please make us tremble) yet with exceeding mercy have pardoned the defects of Theodosius, and given it your entire approbation. My genius, madam, was your favourite when the poet was unknown, and openly received your smiles, before I had the honour to pay your Grace the most submissive gratitude for so illustrious and advantageous a protection. To let the world too know, that you do not think it beneath you to be officiously good, even from the extremest heights to discern the lowest creatures, and give them all the noblest influence you can, you brought her Royal Highness just at the exigent time, whose single presence on the Poet's day is a subsistence for him all the year after. Ah, madam! if all the short-lived happiness that miserable poets can enjoy consists in commendation only; nay, if the most part are content with popular breath, and even for that are thankful, how shall I express myself to your Grace, who by a particular goodness and innate sweetness, merely for the sake of doing well, have thus raised me above myself? To have your Grace's favour is, in a word, to have the applause of the whole court, who are its noblest ornament; magnificent and eternal praise. Something there is in your mien, so much above that we vulgarly call charming, that to me it seems adorable, and your presence almost divine, whose dazzling and majestic form is a proper mansion for the most elevated soul. And let me tell the world—nay, sighing speak it to a barbarous age, (I cannot hold

calling it so when I think of Rome or Greece) your extraordinary love for heroic poetry is not the least argument to shew the greatness of your mind and fulness of perfection. To hear you speak with that infinite sweetness and chearfulness of spirit that is natural to your Grace is, methinks, to hear our tutelary angels; it is to bemoan the present malicious times, and remember the golden age; but to behold you too is to make prophets quite forget their heaven, and bind the poets with eternal rapture.

—Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
That one might almost say her body thought.
You, for whose body God made better clay,
Or took souls' stuff, such as shall late decay,
Or such as need small change at the last day.

DR. DONNE.

Ziphares and Semandra were first your Grace's favourites; and though I ought not, madam, to praise your wit by your judgment of my painting, yet I must say such characters every dauber cannot draw. It has been observed against me, that I abound in ungoverned fancy; but I hope the world will pardon the sallies of youth: age, despondence, and dullness, come too fast of themselves. I discommend no man for keeping the beaten road; but I am sure the noble hunters that follow the game, must leap hedges and ditches sometimes, and run at all, or never come into the fall of the quarry. My comfort is, I cannot

be so ridiculous a creature to any man as I am to myself; for who should know the house so well as the good man at home, who when his neighbours come to see him still sets the best rooms to view, and if he is not a wild ass keeps the rubbish and lumber in some dark hole whither nobody comes but himself to mortify at melancholy hours! But how then, madam, in this unsuitable condition, how shall I answer the infinite honours and obligations your Grace has laid upon me, your Grace, who is the most beautiful idea of love and glory, who to that divine composition have the noblest and best natured wit in the world. All I can promise, madam, and am able to perform is, that your Grace shall never see a play of mine that shall give offence to modesty and virtue; and what I humbly offer to the world shall be of use at least, and I hope deserve imitation; which is or ought to be, I am sure, the design of all tragedies and comedies both ancient and modern. I should presume to promise myself too some success in things of this nature, if your Grace (in whom the charms of beauty, wit, and goodness, seem reconciled) at a leisure hour would condescend to correct with your excellent judgment the errors of,

Madam,

your Grace's most humble,

most obedient,

and devoted servant,

NAT. LEE.

THEODOSIUS;

OR,

THE FORCE OF LOVE.

THIS Tragedy, like the far greater number of our plays, is founded upon the passion of love; and displays to us the effects of its subtle influence, even upon the hearts of those, whom the lust of power might naturally be expected to withdraw from every finer sensation than that of ambition.

Some exception may be taken to a sort of under-plot in this piece, as it is mean and feeble; yet I know not whether the loves of Varanes and of Theodosius are not set off by the passion of Mariana—the contrast is certainly forcible, and nothing therefore lies against it but that it contains a monotony of incident, though not of manners.

Marcian indeed always sullies the splendor of the scene—his images are frequently impure, and his expression generally coarse—He once exclaims—

I see each starving soldier bound from earth,
As if some god by miracle had rais'd him,
And, with beholding you, *grow fat again.*

This play is marked strongly by that bold, but irregular flight of imagination which strained the chords

of sanity until they cracked—Yet it obviously wears the stamp of poetic power impressed by the fine fervour of a luxuriant fancy.

We are sorry to observe the necessity of genius addressing a Dutchess of Richmond in the following among other sentences of absurdity :

“ To have your Grace’s favour is magnificent and eternal praise—Something there is in your mien so much above that we vulgarly call *charming*; that to me it seems *adorable*, and your presence almost *divine*, whose dazzling and majestic form is a proper mansion for the most elevated soul.”

One is at a loss to decide which deserves most of our contempt or pity—the giver or receiver of such fulsome flattery. We are now fortunately estranged from such prostitution of language.

PROLOGUE.

*W*IT long oppress'd and fill'd at last with rage,
Thus in a sullen mood rebukes the age:
What loads of fame do modern heroes bear
For an inglorious, long, and lazy war,
Who for some skirmish or a safe retreat
(Not to be dragg'd to battle) are call'd great!
But oh! what do ambitious statesmen gain
Who into private chests all nations drain?
What sums of gold they hoard is daily known
To all mens' cost, and sometimes to their own.
Your lawyer too, that like an O yes bawls,
That drowns the market higglers in the stalls,
That seem begot, conceiv'd, and born, in brawls,
Yet thrives: he and his crowd get what they please;
Swarming all term-time thro' the Strand like bees,
They buzz at Westminster and lie for fees.
The godly too their ways of getting have,
But none so much as your fanatick knave;
Wisely the wealthiest livings they refuse
Who by the fattest bishoprics would lose,
Who with short hair, large ears, and small blue band,
True rogues! their own not God's elect command.
Let pigs then be prophane, but broth's allow'd;
Possets and Christian caudles may be good,
Meet helps to reinforce a brother's brood;

*Therefore each female saint he doth advise
With groans, and hums, and has, and goggling eyes,
To rub him down and make the spirit rise,
While with his zeal transported, from the ground
He mounts, and sanctifies the sisters round.
On poets only no kind star e'er smil'd ;
Curst fate has damn'd 'em ev'ry mother's child ;
Therefore he warns his brothers of the stage
To write no more for an ungrateful age.
Think what penurious masters you have serv'd ;
Tasso ran mad, and noble Spenser starv'd :
Turn then, whoe'er thou art, that canst write well,
Thy ink to gall, and in lampoons excel ;
Forswear all honesty, traduce the great,
Grow impudent, and rail against the state ;
Bursting with spleen abroad thy pasquils send,
And choose some libel spreader for thy friend :
The wit and want of Timon point thy mind,
And for thy satire subject choose mankind.*

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

THEODOSIUS,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Brereton.
VARANES,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Barry.
MARCIAN,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
LUCIUS,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Keen.
ATTICUS, Chief Priest,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. J. Aickin.
LEONTINE,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Hurst.
ARANTHES,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Davies.

Women.

PULCHERIA,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Miss Sherry.
ATHENAIS,	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Barry.

Attendants, Chorus.

SCENE, Constantinople.



THEODOSIUS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A stately Temple, which represents the Christian Religion as in it's first Magnificence, being but lately established at Rome and Constantinople; the Side-scenes show the horrid Tortures with which the Roman Tyrants persecuted the Church, and the flat Scene, which is the Limit of the Prospect, discovers an Altar richly adorned; before it CONSTANTINE (supposed) kneels, with Commanders about him, gazing at a bloody Cross in the Air, which being encompassed with many Angels offers itself to view with these Words distinctly written, In hoc signo vinces. Instruments are heard, and many Attendants; the Ministers at Divine Service walk busily up and down 'till ATTICUS, the Chief of all the Priests, and Successor of St. CHRYSOSTOM, in rich Robes comes forward with the Philosopher LEONTINE, the Waiters in Ranks bowing all the Way before him.

A Chorus heard at a Distance.

*PREPARE, prepare! the rites begin,
Let none unhallow'd enter in;*

*The temples with new glories shines,
Adorn the altars, wash the shrines,
And purge the place from sin.*

Attic. Oh Leontine! was ever morn like this
Since the celestial incarnation dawn'd?
I think no day since that such glory gave
To Christian altars as this morning brings.

Leon. Great successor of holy Chrysostom,
“Who now triumphs above, a saint of honour,
“Next in degree to those bright sons of heaven
“Who never fell nor stain'd their orient beams,”
What shall I answer, how shall I approach you
Since my conversion, which your breath inspir'd?

Attic. To see this day the emp'ror of the east
Leaves all the pleasures that the earth can yield,
“That Nature can bestow or art invent.
“In his life's spring and bloom of gawdy years,
“Confin'd to narrow rooms and gloomy walks,
“Fasting and exercises of devotion,
“Which from his bed at midnight must awake him,”
To undergo the penance of a cloister,
Methinks, oh Leontine! 'tis something more
Than yet philosophy could ever reach.

Leon. True, Atticus; you have amaz'd my reason.

Attic. Yet more: to our religion's lasting honour
Mariana and Flavilla, two young virgins
Imperial born, cast in the fairest mould
That e'er the hand of beauty form'd for woman,
“The mirrors of our court, where chastity

“ And innocence might copy spotless lustre,”
To-day with Theodosius leave the world.

Leon. Methinks at such a glorious resignation
Th’ angelic order should at once descend
“ In all the paint and drapery of heaven,
“ With charming voices and with lulling strings,”
To give full grace to such triumphant zeal.

Attic. No, Leontine; I fear there is a fault,
For when I last confess’d the emperor,
“ Whether disgust and melancholy blood
“ From restless passions urg’d not this divorce ?”
He only answer’d me with sighs and blushes.
‘Tis sure his soul is of the tend’rest make,
Therefore I’ll tax him strictly : but, my friend,
Why should I give his character to you,
Who when his father sent him into Persia
Were by that mighty monarch then appointed
To breed him with his son, the Prince Varanes ?

Leon. And what will raise your admiration is,
That two such diff’rent tempers should agree.
You know that Theodosius is composed
Of all the softness that should make a woman:
Judgment almost like fear foreruns his actions,
And he will poise an injury so long
As if he had rather pardon than revenge it;
But the young Persian prince, quite opposite,
So fiery fierce that those who view him nearly
May see his haughty soul still mounting in his face;
Yet did I study these so diff’rent tempers
’Till I at last had form’d a perfect union,

“ As if two souls did but inform one body ;
A friendship that may challenge all the world,
And at the proof be matchless.

Attic. I long to read

This gallant prince, who, as you have inform'd me,
Comes from his father's court to see our emperor.

Leon. So he intended till he came to Athens,
And at my homely board beheld my daughter,
When as fate order'd she, who never saw
The glories of a court, “ bred up to books
“ In closets like a Sybil ; she, I say,
“ (Long since from Persia brought by me to Athens)”
Unskill'd in charms but those which nature gave her,
Wounded this scornful prince : in short, he forc'd me
To wait him thither, with deep protestations
That moment that bereft him of the sight
Of Athenais gave him certain death,
But see, my daughter honour'd with his presence.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter VARANES and ATHENAI.

Var. 'Tis strange, oh, Athenais ! wondrous all,
Wondrous the shrines, and wonderful the altars.
The martyrs—tho' but drawn in painted flames,
Amaze me with the image of their sufferings ;
Saints canoniz'd that dar'd with Roman tyrants ;
Hermits that liv'd in caves and fed with angels,
By Orosmaes it is wondrous all !
That bloody cross in yonder azure sky,
Above the head of kneeling Constantine,

Inscrib'd about with golden characters
Thou shalt o'ercome in this; if it be true,
 I say again, by heaven 't is wondrous strange.

Athen. Oh, prince! if thus imagination stirs you,
 A fancy rais'd from figures in dead walls,
 How would the sacred breath of Atticus
 Inspire your breast, purge all your dross away,
 And drive this Athenais from your soul;
 "To make a virgin room whom yet the mould
 "Of your rude fancy cannot comprehend!"

Var. What says my fair! drive Athenais from me!
 "Start me not into phrenzy, lest I rail
 "At all religion and fall out with Heaven."
 And what is she, alas! that would supplant thee?
 Were she the mistress of the world, as fair
 As winter stars or summer setting suns,
 And thou set by in nature's plainest dress,
 With that chaste, modest look, when first I saw thee,
 The heiress of a poor philosopher, [*Records ready*
to flourish.

I swear by all I wish, by all I love,
 Glory and thee, I would not lose a thought
 Nor cast an eye that way, but rush to thee,
 To these lov'd arms, and lose myself for ever.

Athen. Forbear, my lord.

Var. Oh! cruel Athenais!
 Why dost thou put me off who pine to death,
 And thrust me from thee when I would approach thee!
 Can there be aught in this? Curse then thy birthright,
 Thy glorious titles and ill-suited greatness,

Since Athenais scorns thee : take again
Your ill-tim'd honours ; take 'em, take 'em, gods,
And change me to some humble villager,
If so at last for toils at scorching noon,
In mowing meadows, or in reaping fields,
At night she will but crown me with a smile,
Or reach the bounty of her hand to bless me.

Athen. When princes speak their subjects should be
silent ;

Yet with humility I would demand
Wherein appears my scorn or my aversion?
Have I not for your sake abandon'd home,
Where I had vow'd to spend my calmer days?
But you, perhaps, imagine it but little,
For a poor maid to follow you abroad,
Especially the daughter of old Leontine ;
Yet I must tell you, prince——

Var. I cannot bear
Those frowns : I have offended ; but forgive me ;
For who, oh Athenais ! that is toss'd
With such tempestuous tides of love as I
Can steer a steady course ? Retire my fair.

[*Recorders flourish.*]

Hark ! the solemnities are now beginning,
And Theodosius comes. Hide, hide thy charms ;
If to his clouded eyes such day should break,
The royal youth, who dotes to death for love,
I fear would forfeit all his vows to Heaven,
And fix upon the world, the world of beauty.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter THEODOSIUS leading MARIANA and FLAVILLA, followed by PULCHERIA, all three dressed in white.

Theo. Farewell, Pulcheria, and I pray no more,
For all thy kind complaints are lost upon me.
Have I not sworn the world and I must part?
Fate has proclaim'd it; therefore weep no more:
“ Wound not the tend'rest part of Theodosius,
“ My yielding soul, that would expire in calms:
Wound me not with thy tears and I will tell thee.
Yet ere I take my last farewell for ever,
The cause of all my suff'rings. Oh, my sister!
A bleeding heart, the stings of pointed love,
What constitution soft as mine can bear?

Pulch. My lord, my emperor, my dearest brother
Why all this while did you conceal it from me?

Theo. Because I was asham'd to own my weakness
“ I knew thy sharper wit and stricter wisdom
“ Would dart reproofs which I could not endure.”
Draw near, oh Atticus! and mark me well,
For never yet did my complaining spirit
Unlade this weighty secret on him,
Nor groan a syllable of her oppression.

Attic. Concealment was a fault; but speak at large,
Make bare the wound, and I will pour in balm.

Theo. 'Tis folly all and fondness—Oh remembrance!
Why dost thou open thus my wound again,
And from my heart call down those warmer drops
That make me die with shame? Hear then, Pulcheria:
Some few preceding days before I left

The Persian court, hunting one morning early
I lost myself and all the company.
Still wand'ring on as fortune should direct me
I past a rivulet, and lighted in
The sweetest solitude I ever saw;
When strait, as if enchantment had been there,
Two charming voices drew me 'till I came
Where divers arbours overlook'd the river.
Upon the osier bank two women sat,
Who when their song was ended talk'd to one
Who bathing stood far in the chrystal stream:
But oh! what thought can paint that fair perfection,
Or give a glimpse of such a naked glory?
Not sea-born Venus in the courts beneath,
When the green nymphs first kiss'd her coral lips,
All polish'd fair and wash'd with orient beauty,
Could in my dazzling fancy match her brightness.

Attic. Think where you are.

Theo. Oh, sir! you must forgive me:
The chaste enthusiastic form appears
As when I saw her; yet I swear, Pulcheria,
Had cold Diana been a looker on
She must have prais'd the virtues of the virgin.
“The Satyrs could not grin,” for she was veil'd;
From her naked bosom
Down to her knees the nymph was wrapp'd in lawn:
But oh: for me, for me, that was too much!
“Her legs, her arms, her hands, her neck, her breasts,
“So nicely shap'd, so matchless in their lustre;”
Such all-perfection, that I took such draughts

Of killing love, and ever since have languish'd
 With ling'ring surfeits of her fatal beauty:
 "Alas! too fatal sure!"—Oh, Atticus!
 Forgive me, for my story now is done.
 The nymph was dress'd, and with her two companions,
 Having descry'd me, shriek'd and fled away,
 Leaving me motionless—'till Leontine,
 Th' instructor of my youth, by chance came in,
 And wak'd me from the wonder that entranc'd me.

Attic. Behold, my lord, the man whom you have
 nam'd

The harbinger of Prince Varanes here.

Enter LEONTINE.

Theo. Oh, Leontine, ten thousand welcomes meet
 thee!

Thou foster father of my tender youth,
 "Who rear'd the plant and prun'd it with such care,
 "How shall I look upon thee, who am fall'n
 "From all the principles of manlier reason,
 "By thee infus'd, to more than woman's weakness."
 Now by the majesty divine that awes
 This sacred place I swear you must not kneel!
 And tell me, for I have a thousand things
 To ask thee; where, where is my godlike friend?
 Is he arriv'd, and shall I see his face
 Before I'm cloister'd from the world for ever?

Leon. He comes, my lord, with all th' expecting joys
 Of a young promis'd lover: from his eyes
 Big hopes look forth, and boiling fancy forms

Nothing but Theodosius still before him :
His thought, his ev'ry word, is Theodosius.

Theo. Yet, Leontine, yet answer me once more ;
With tremblings I demand thee.
Say——hast thou seen, oh ! has that heavenly form
Appear'd to thee again ?——Behold, he's dumb :
Proceed then to the solemn last farewell ;
Never was man so willing and prepar'd.

Enter VARANES, ARANTHES, and Attendants.

Var. Where is my friend ? oh, where is my belov'd,
My Theodosius ! point him out ye gods !
That I may press him dead betwixt my arms,
Devour him thus with over-hasty joys
That languish at his breast quite out of breath,
And cannot utter more.

Theo. Thou mightiest pleasure,
And greatest blessing that kind Heaven could send
To glad my parting soul, a thousand welcomes !
Oh ! when I look on thee new starts of glory
Spring in my breast, and with a backward bound
I run the race of lusty youth again.

Var. By heaven it joys me too when I remember
Our thousand pastimes, when we borrow'd names,
Alcides I, and thou my dearest Theseus,
When thro' the woods we chas'd the foaming boar
With hounds that open'd like Thessalian bulls,
Like tigers flu'd, and sanded as the shore,
With ears and chests that dash'd the morning dew ;
Driven with a spurt, as ships are tost in storms,

We ran like hinds, and matchless was our course !
Now sweeping o'er the limit of a hill,
Now with a full career came thund'ring down
The precipice and sweat along the vale.

Theo. Oh, glorious time! and when the gath'ring
clouds

Have call'd us home, say, did we rest my brother?
When on the stage to the admiring court
We strove to represent Alcides' fury,
In all that raging heat and pomp of madness
With which the stately Seneca adorn'd him,
So lively drawn, and painted with such horror
That we were forc'd to give it o'er, so loud
The virgin's shriek'd, so fast they dy'd away.

Var. My Theodosius still; 'tis my lov'd brother!
And by the gods we'll see those times again!
Why then has rumour wrong'd thee, that reported
Christian enthusiasm had charm'd thee from us;
That drawn by priests, and work'd by melancholy,
Thou hadst laid the golden reins of empire down
And sworn yourself a votary for ever?

Theo. 'Tis almost true; and had not you arriv'd
The solemn business had by this been ended.
This I have made the empress of the east
My elder sister: these with me retire,
Devoted to the power whom we adore.

Var. What power is that that merits such oblations?
I thought the sun more great and glorious
Than any that e'er mingled with the gods,
Yet ev'n to him my father never offer'd

More than a hecatomb of bulls and horses.
Now, by those golden beams that glad the world,
I swear it is too much : for one of these
But half so bright our god would drive no more ;
He 'd leave the darken'd globe, and in some cave
Enjoy such charms for ever.

Attic. My lord, forbear ;
Such language does not suit with our devotions :
Nothing profane must dare to murmur here,
Nor stain the hallow'd beauties of the place.
But thus far we must yield ! the emperor
Is not enough prepar'd to leave the world.

Var. Thus low, most reverend of this sacred place,
I bow for pardon, and am half converted,
By your permission that my Theodosius
Return to my embraces. Oh, my brother !
Why dost thou droop ? there will be time enough
For prayer and fasting, and religious vows ;
Let us enjoy, while yet thou art my own,
All the magnificence of eastern courts.
I hate to walk a lazy life away ;
Let's run the race which fate has set before us,
And post to the dark goal.

Theo. Cruel destiny !
“ Why am not I thus too ? Oh, my Varanes !
“ Why are these costly dishes set before me ?
“ Why do these sounds of pleasure strike my ears ?
“ Why are these joys brought to my sick remembrance,
“ Who have no appetite, but am to sense
“ From head to foot all a dead palsy o'er ?

“ *Var.* Fear not, my friend ; all shall be well
 “ Again ; for I have thousand ways and thousand stories
 “ To raise thee up to pleasure. We’ll unlock
 “ Our fastest secrets, shed upon each other
 “ Our tend’rest cares, and quite unbar those doors
 “ Which shall be shut to all mankind beside.”

Attic. Silence and rev’rence are the temple’s dues,
 Therefore while we pursue the sacred rites
 Be these observ’d, or quit the awful place.
 “ Imperial sisters, now twin stars of Heaven,
 “ Answer the successor of Chrysostom ;
 “ Without least reservation answer me ;
 “ By those harmonious rules I charg’d ye learn.”

ATTICUS *sings.*

Attic. *Canst thou, Marina, leave the world,
 The world that is devotion’s bane,
 Where crowns are tost and sceptres hurl’d,
 Where lust and proud ambition reign ?*

2. Pr. “ *Can you your costly robes forbear,
 “ To live with us in poor attire ?
 “ Can you from courts to cells repair,
 “ To sing at midnight in our choir ?*

3. Pr. “ *Can you forget your golden beds,
 “ Where you might sleep beyond the morn,
 “ On mats to lay your royal heads,
 “ And have your beauteous tresses shorn ?*

Attic. "Can you resolve to fast all day,
"And weep and groan to be forgiven?
"Can you in broken slumbers pray,
"And by affliction merit heaven?"

Chor. Say, Votaries, can this be done?
While we the grace divine implore,
The world is lost, the battles' won,
And sin shall never charm ye more.

MARINA sings.

The gate to bliss does open stand,
And all my penance is in view;
The world upon the other hand
Cries out, Oh do not bid adieu!

"Yet, sacred, sir, in these extremes,
"Where pomp and pride their glories tell,
"Where youth and beauty are the themes,
"And plead their moving cause so well."

If aught that's vain my thoughts possess,
Or any passions govern here
But what divinity may bless,
Oh, may I never enter there!

FLAVILLA sings.

"What can pomp or glory do,
"Or what can human charms persuade?
"That mind that has a heaven in view,
"How can it be by earth betray'd?"

“ No monarch, full of youth and fame,
 “ The joy of eyes and nature’s pride,
 “ Should once my thoughts from Heaven reclaim,
 “ Tho’ now he woo’d me for his bride.”

*Haste then, oh haste! and take us in,
 For ever lock religion’s door;
 Secure us from the charms of sin,
 And let us see the world no more.*

ATTICUS sings.

*Hark, hark! behold the heavenly choir,
 They cleave the air in bright attire,
 And see his lute each angel brings,
 And hark! divinely thus he sings:
 To the Pow’rs divine all glory be given,
 By men upon earth and angels in Heaven.*

[Scene shuts, and all the Priests, with Marina and Flavilla, disappear.

Pulch. For ever gone! for ever parted from me!
 Oh Theodosius! till this cruel moment
 I never knew how tenderly I lov’d em;
 But on this everlasting separation
 Methinks my soul has left me, and my time
 Of dissolution points me to the grave.

Theo. Oh, my Veranes! does not now thy temper
 Bate something of its fire? Dost thou not melt
 In mere compassion of my sister’s fate,
 And cool thyself with one relenting draught?

Var. Yes, my dar’d soul rolls inward; melancholy,

Which I ne'er felt before, now comes upon me,
 And I begin to loathe all human greatness :
 Oh ! sigh not then, nor thy hard fate deplore,
 For 'tis resolv'd we will be kings no more :
 We'll fly all courts, and love shall be our guide,
 Love, that's more worth than all the world beside.
 Princes are barr'd the liberty to roam ;
 The fetter'd mind still languishes at home ;
 In golden bands she treads the thoughtful round,
 Business and cares eternally abound ;
 And when for air the goddess would unbind,
 She's clogg'd with sceptres, and to crowns confin'd.
[Exeunt.]

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Palace. Enter PULCHERIA, JULIA, and Attendants.

Pulcheria.

THESE packets for the emperor Honorius :
 Be swift, and let th' agent haste to Rome——
 I hear, my Julia, that our general
 Is from the Goths return'd with conquest home.

Jul. He is ; to-day I saw him in the presence
 Sharp to the courtiers, as he ever was,
 Because they went not with him to the wars :
 To you he bows, and sues to kiss your hand.

Pulch. He shall, my dearest Julia ! Oft' I've told
 thee

The secret of my soul. If e'er I marry
 Marcian's my husband : he 's a man, my Julia,
 Whom I 've study'd long, and found him perfect ;
 Old Rome at ev'ry glance looks thro' his eyes
 And kindles the beholders. Some sharp atoms
 Run thro' his frame which I could wish were out :
 He sickens at the softness of the emp'ror,
 And speaks too freely of our female court,
 Then sighs, comparing it with what Rome was.

Enter MARCIAN and LUCIUS.

Pulch. Ha ! who are these that dare profane this
 place
 With more than barb'rous insolence ?

Mar. At your feet
 Behold I cast the scourge of these offenders,
 And kneel to kiss your hand.

Pulch. Put up your sword ;
 And ere I bid you welcome from the wars
 Be sure you clear your honour of this rudeness,
 Or, Marcian, leave the court.

Mar. Thus then, madam :
 The emperor receiv'd me with affection,
 Embrac'd me for my conquests, and retir'd ;
 When on a sudden all the gilded flies
 That buzz about the court came flutt'ring round me :
 This with affected cringes and minc'd words
 Begs me to tell my tale of victories ;
 Which done he thanks me, slips behind his fellow,
 Whispers him in the ear, then smiles and listens

While I relate my story once again :
A third comes in and asks me the same favour,
Whereon they laugh, while I, still ignorant,
Go on ; but one behind, more impudent,
Strikes on my shoulder, then they laugh'd outright ;
But then I, guessing the abuse too late,
Return'd my knight behind a box o' the ear,
Then drew, and briefly told them they were rascals :
They, laughing still, cry'd out the general's musty ;
Whereon I drove 'em, madam, as you saw.
This is, in short, the truth ; I leave the judgment
To your own justice : if I have done ill
Sentence me, and I'll leave the court for ever.

Pulch. First, you are welcome, Marcian, from the
wars,

And still, whene'er occasion calls for arms,
Heav'n send the emperor a general
Renown'd as Marcian ! As to what is past,
I think the world will rather praise than censure
Pulcheria, when she pardons you the action.

Mar. Gods, gods ! and thou great founder of old
Rome !

What is become of all that mighty spirit
That rais'd our empire to a pitch so high ?
“ Where is it pent ? What but almighty pow'r
“ Could thus confine it, that but some few atoms
“ Now run thro' all the east and Occident ? ”

Pulch. Speak calmly, Marcian——

Mar. Who can be temperate
That thinks as I do, madam ? Why ! here's a fellow,

I've seen him fight against a troop of Vandals
In your defence, as if he lov'd to bleed.

"Come to my arms, my dear! thou canst not talk,

"But has a soul above the proudest of 'em.

"Oh, madam! when he has been all over blood,

"And hack'd with wounds that seem'd to mouth his
praises,

"I've seen him smile still as he push'd death from
him,

"And with his actions rally distant fate.

"*Pulch.* He has a noble form."

Mar. Yet, ev'n this man,

That fought so bravely in his country's cause,

This excellent man, this morning, in the presence,

Did I see wrong'd before the emperor;

Scorn'd and despis'd, because he could not cringe,

Nor plant his feet as some of them could do.

"One said his clothes were not well made, and damn'd

"His taylor——another said he look'd

"As if he had not lost his maidenhead."

If things are suffer'd to be thus, down all

Authority, pre-eminence, degree, and virtue;

Let Rome be never mention'd; no, i' th' name

Of all the gods be she forgotten ever!

Effeminate Persians and the Lydian softness

Make all your fights: Marcian shall out no more,

For by my arms it makes a woman of me;

And my swol'n eyes run o'er, to think this worth,

This fuller honour than the whole court holds,

Should be ridiculous to knaves and fools,

“ Should starve for want of what is necessary
“ To life’s convenience, when luxurious bawds
“ Are so o’ergrown with fat and cramm’d with riot,
“ That they can hardly walk without an engine.”

Pulch. Why did not you inform the emperor?

Mar. Because he will not hear me. Alas! good man,
He flies from this bad world; and still when wars
And dangers come, he runs to his devotions;
To your new thing—I know not what you call it,
Which Constantine began.

Pulch. How, Marcian! are not you
Of that religion which the emp’ror owns?

Mar. No, madam. If you’ll see my honest thoughts,
I am not of their principle that take
A wrong; so far from bearing with a foe
I would strike first, like old Rome; “I would forth,
“ Elbow the neighb’ring nations round about,
“ Invade, enlarge my empire to the bounds
“ Of the too narrow universe. Yes, I own
“ That I despise your holy innovations;
“ I’m for the Roman gods, for funeral piles,
“ For mounting eagles, and the fancy’d greatness
“ Of our forefathers.” Methinks my heated spirit
Could utter things worth losing of my head.

Pulch. Speak freely, Marcian, for I know thee honest.

Mar. Oh, madam! long, long may the emp’ror
live!

But I must say his gentle disposition
Suits not, alas! the oriental sway:
“ Bid him but look on Pharamond; oh Gods!

“Awake him with the image of that spirit
 “Which, like a pyramid revers’d, is grown
 “Ev’n from a point to the most dreadful greatness;
 “His very name already shakes the world,
 “And still in person heading his fierce squadrons,
 “Like the first Cæsar o’er the hardy Gauls,
 “He seems another thunderbolt of war.”

Pulch. I oft’ have blam’d my brother most for this,
 That to my hand he leaves the state affairs;
 And how that sounds you know——

Mar. Forgive me, madam!
 I think that all the greatness of your sex,
 Rome’s Clelia, and the fam’d Semiramis,
 “With all the Amazonian valour too,”
 Meet in Pulcheria: yet I say forgive me,
 If with reluctance I behold a woman
 Sit at the empire’s helm and steer the world!

Pulch. I stand rebuk’d——

Mar. “Mark but the growing French:
 “The most auspicious omen of their greatness
 “That I can guess is their late Salique law,
 “Bless’d by their priests the Salii, and pronounc’d
 “To stand for ever, which excludes all women
 “From the imperial crown.” But oh! I speak
 The least of all those infinite grievances
 Which make the subjects murmur. In the army,
 Tho’ I proceeded still like Hannibal,
 And punish’d ev’ry mutineer with death,
 Yet oh! it stabb’d me thro’ and thro’ the soul
 To pass the wretches’ doom, because I knew

With justice they complain'd ; for hard they fought,
And with their blood earn'd that forbidden bread
Which some at court, and great ones, tho' unnam'd,
Cast to their hounds, while the poor soldiers starv'd—

Pulch. Your pity too, in mournful fellowship,
No doubt might soothe their murmurs.

Mar. Yes, it did ;
That I might put them once again in heart
I said 't was true the emp'ror was to blame,
Who dealt too coldly with his faithful servants,
And paid their great arrears by second-hands :
I promis'd too, when we return'd to court,
Things should be mended——

But how, oh gods ! forgive my blood this transport ;
To the eternal shame of female counsels,
And to the blast of Theodosius' name,
Whom never warlike chronicle shall mention,
“ Oh, let me speak it with a Roman spirit ! ”
We were receiv'd like undone prodigals,
By curs'd ungrateful stewards, with cold looks,
Who yet got all by those poor wretches' ruin,
“ Like malefactors at the hands of justice.
“ I blush, I almost weep, with bursting rage ;
“ If thus receiv'd how paid our long arrears ?
“ Why, as intrusted misers pay the rights
“ Of helpless widows or the orphans' tears.
“ Oh, soldier ! for to thee, to thee I speak it,
“ Bawds for the drudgery of citizens' wives
“ Would better pay debilitated stallions.”
Madam, I 've said perhaps too much ; if so

It matters not ; for he who lies, like me,
On the hard ground, is sure to fall no further.

Pulch. I've given you patient hearing, honest
Marcian,

And as far as I can see into your temper,

“ I speak my serious judgment in cold blood,

“ With strictest consultation on the matter,”

I think this seeming plain and honest Marcian

An exquisite and most notorious traitor.

Mar. Ha ! traitor !

Pulch. Yes, a most notorious traitor..

“ *Mar.* Your grandfather, whose frown could awe
the world,

“ Would not have call'd me so—or if he had——

Pulch. “ You would have taken it.”——But to the
bus'ness.

Was't not enough, oh heaven thou know'st too much !

At first to own yourself an infidel,

A bold contemner, ev'n to blasphemy,

Of that religion which we all profess,

For which your heart's best blood can ne'er suffice,

But you must dare, with a seditious army,

Thus to conspire against the emperor ?

I mention not your impudence to me,

Taxing the folly of my government

Ev'n to my face, such an irreverence

As sure no barb'rous Vandal would have urg'd ;

Besides your libelling all the court, as if

You had engross'd the whole world's honesty,

And flatt'ers, fools, and sycophants, and knaves,
Such was your language, did inhabit there.

Mar. You wrest my honest meaning, by the gods
You do; “and if you thus go on I feel
“My struggling spirit will no longer bear it.”

Pulch. I thought the meaning of all rational men
Should still be gather'd out of their discourse;
Nor are you so imprudent without thinking
To vent such words, tho' now you fain would hide it.
You find the guilt and balk the accusation.
But think not you shall scape so easily:
Once more I do confront you as a traitor;
And as I am intrusted with full pow'r,
Divest you, in the name of Theodosius,
Of all your offices, commissions, honours;
Command you leave the court within three days,
Loyal, plain-dealing, honest Marcian.

Mar. Gods! gods!

Pulch. “What now? Ha! does the traitor murmur?
“If in three days—mark me—'t is I that doom thee—
“Rash inconsiderate man, a wretch beneath
“The torments I could execute upon thee,”
If after three days space thou'rt found in court
Thou dy'st; thy head, thy head shall pay the forfeit.
“Now rage, now rail, and curse the court;
“Saucily dare t' abuse the best of princes,
“And let thy lawless tongue lash all it can;
“Do, like a madman rave, deplore thy fortune
“While pages laugh at thee.” Then haste to th' army,

Grow popular, and lead the multitude ;
 Preach up thy wrongs, and drive the giddy beast
 To kick at Cæsar. Nay, if thou weep'st I 'm gone.
 Oh, Julia! if I stay I shall weep too.
 Yet 't is but just that I the heart should see
 Of him who yet must lord it over me. [*Aside.*

Exeunt Pulch. and Julia.

Luc. Why do you droop, sir?—Come, no more
 o' this;

You are and shall be still our general.
 Say but the word, I'll fill the Hippodrome
 With squadrons that shall make the emp'ror tremble.
 We'll fire the court about his ears.
 Methinks, like Junius Brutus, I have watch'd
 An opportunity, and now it comes—
 Few words and I are friends; but, noble Marcian!
 If yet thou art not more than general
 Ere dead of night say Lucius is a coward.

Mar. I charge thee, in the name of all the gods,
 Come back; I charge thee by the name of friend.
 All's well, and I rejoice I am no general.
 But hush! within three days we must begone,
 And then, my friend, farewell to ceremony:
 We'll fly to some far distant lonely village,
 Forget our former state, and breed with slaves,
 And when night comes,
 With bodies coarsely fill'd, and vacant souls,
 Sleep like the labour'd hinds, and never think,
 For if I think again I shall go mad:

Enter LEONTINE and ATHENAIS.

Therefore no thought. But see, we're interrupted,
Oh court! oh emperor! yet let death threaten
I'll find a time; 'till then be still my soul—

“ No general now; a member of thy country,

“ But most corrupt, therefore to be cut off;

“ Loyal, plain-dealing, honest Marcian.

“ A slave, a traitor! Oh, ye eternal gods!”—

[Exeunt.]

Leon. So Athenais, now our compliment
To the young Persian prince is at an end,
What then remains but that we take our leave,
And bid him everlastingly farewell?

Athen. My lord!

Leon. I say that decency requires
We should be gone, nor can you stay with honour.

Athen. Most true, my lord!

Leon. The court is now at peace,
The emperor's sisters are retir'd for ever,
And he himself compos'd; what hinders then
But that we bid adieu to Prince Varanes?

Athen. Ah, sir! why will ye break my heart?

Leon. I would not;

Thou art the only comfort of my age:
Like an old tree I stand amongst the storms;
Thou art the only limb that I have left me, *[She kneels.]*
My dear green branch! and how I prize thee, child,
Heaven only knows. Why dost thou kneel and weep?

Athen. Because you are so good, and will, I hope,
 Forgive my faults, who first occasion'd it.

Leon. I charg'd thee to receive and hear the prince.

Athen. You did! and oh! my lord, I heard too
 much,

Too much, I fear, for my eternal quiet.

Leon. Rise Athenais; credit him who bears
 More years than thou: Varanes has deceiv'd thee.

Athen. How do we differ then? You judge the prince
 Impious and base, while I take Heaven to witness
 I think him the most virtuous of men;
 Therefore take heed, my lord, how you accuse him
 Before you make the trial. Alas, Varanes!
 If thou art false there's no such thing on earth
 As solid goodness or substantial honour.

A thousand times, my lord, he has sworn to give me
 (And I believe his oaths) his crown and empire
 That day I make him master of my heart.

Leon. That day he 'll make thee mistress of his
 pow'r,
 Which carries a foul name among the vulgar.
 No, Athenais, let me see thee dead,
 Borne a pale corpse, and gently laid in earth,
 So I may say she's chaste and dy'd a virgin,
 Rather than view thee with these wounded eyes
 Seated upon the throne of Isdigerdes,
 The blast of common tongues, the nobles' scorn
 Thy father's curse, that is, the prince's whore.

Athen. Oh, horrid supposition! how I detest it
 Be witness Heaven that sees my secret thoughts!

“ Have I for this, my lord, been taught by you
“ The nicest justice and severest virtue,
“ To fear no death, to know no end of life,
“ And with long search discern the highest good ?
“ No Athenais ; when the day beholds thee
“ So scandalously rais’d, pride cast thee down ;
“ The scorn of honour and the people’s prey ! ”

No, cruel Leontine, not to redeem,
That aged head from the descending axe,
Not, tho’ I saw thy trembling body rack’d,
Thy wrinkles all about thee fill’d with blood,
Would I for empire, to the man I love
Be made the object of unlawful pleasure.

Leon. Oh greatly said, and by the blood which warms
me !

Which runs as rich as any Athens holds,
It would improve the virtue of the world
If ev’ry day a thousand votaries
And thousand virgins came from far to hear thee !

Athen. Look down, ye pow’rs, take notice we obey
The rigid principles ye have infus’d ;
Yet oh, my noble father ! to convince you,
Since you will have it so, propose a marriage,
Tho’ with the thought I’m cover’d o’er with blushes :
Not that I doubt the prince ; that were to doubt
The heavens themselves. I know he is all truth :
But modesty—————

The virgin’s troublesome and constant guest,
That, that alone forbids—————

Leon. I wish to Heaven

There prove no greater bar to my relief.
Behold the prince : I will retire a while,
And when occasion calls come to thy aid. [*Exit Leon.*

Enter VARANES and ARANTHES.

Var. To fix her on the throne to me seems little ;
Were I a god yet would I raise her higher ;
This is the nature of thy prince : but oh !
As to the world thy judgment soars above me,
And I am dar'd with this gigantic honour ;
Glory forbids her prospect to a crown,
Nor must she gaze that way : my haughty soul
That day when she ascends the throne of Cyrus,
Will leave my body pale, and to the stars
Retire in blushes, and quite lost for ever.

Aran. What do you purpose then ?

Var. I know not what.

But see, she comes, the glory of my arms ;
The only business of my constant thought,
My soul's best joy, and all my true repose.
I swear I cannot bear these strange desires,
These strong impulses, which will shortly leave me
Dead at thy feet——

Athen. What have you found, my lord,
In me so harsh or cruel that you fear
To speak your griefs ?

Var. First let me kneel and swear,
And on thy hand seal my religious vow :
Straight let the breath of gods blow me from earth,
Swept from the book of fame, forgotten ever,

If I prefer thee not, oh Athenais!
To all the Persian greatness.

Athen. I believe you,
For I have heard you swear as much before.

Var. Hast thou? oh, why then did I swear again,
But that my love knew nothing worthier of thee,
And could no better way express my passion?

Athen. Oh, rise my lord!——

Var. I will do ev'ry thing
Which Athenais bids: if there be more
In nature to convince thee of my love,
Whisper it, oh! some god, into my ear,
And on her breast thus to her list'ning soul
I'll breathe the inspiration. Wilt thou not speak?
What, but one sigh, no more! can that suffice
For all my vast expense of prodigal love?

“ Oh, Athenais! what shall I say or do

“ To gain the thing I wish?

“ *Athen.* What's that, my lord?

“ *Var.* Thus to approach thee still, thus to behold
thee——

“ Yet there is more.”——

Athen. My lord, I dare not hear you.

Var. Why dost thou frown at what thou dost not
know?

'Tis an imagination which ne'er pierc'd thee;
Yet as 't is ravishing, 'tis full of honour.

Athen. I must not doubt you, sir; but, oh! I
tremble

To think if Isdigerdes should behold you,

Should hear you thus protesting to a maid
Of no degree but virtue in the world—

Var. No more of this, no more ; for I disdain
All pomp when thou art by. Far be the noise
Of kings and courts from us, whose gentle souls
Our kinder stars have steer'd another way.
Free as the forest birds we'll pair together,
Without remembering who our fathers were,
Fly to the arbours, grots, and flowery meads,
And in soft murmurs interchange our souls,
Together drink the chrystal of the stream,
Or taste the yellow fruit which autumn yields,
And when the golden ev'ning calls us home
Wing to our downy nest and sleep 'till morn.

Athen. Ah! prince! no more : forbear, forbear,
to charm me,
Since I am doom'd to leave you, sir, for ever.

Var. Hold, Athenais—

Athen. I know your royal temper,
And that high honour reigns within your breast,
Which would disdain to waste so many hours
With one of humble birth compar'd to you,
Unless strong passion sway'd your thoughts to love
her ?

Therefore receive, oh prince! and take it kindly,
For none on earth but you could win it from me,
Receive the gift of my eternal love;
'Tis all I can bestow; nor is it little,
For sure a heart so coldly chaste as mine
No charms but yours, my lord, could e'er have warm'd

Var. Well have you made amends by this last comfort

For the cold dart you shot at me before :

For this last goodness, oh, my Athenais !

(For now methinks I ought to call you mine)

I'll empty all my soul in thanks before you :

Yet oh ! one fear remains, like death it chills me,

Why, my relenting love, did talk of parting !

Athen. Look there, and cease to wonder. I have sworn

T' obey my father, and he calls me hence.

Enter LEONTINE.

Var. Ha, Leontine ! by which of all my actions
Have I so deeply injur'd thee to merit

The smartest wound revenge could form to end me ?

Leon. Answer me now, oh prince ! for virtue
prompts me,

And honesty will dally now no longer :

What can the end of all this passion be ?

Glory requires the strict account, and asks

What you intend at last to Athenais ?

Var. How, Leontine !

Leon. You saw her, sir, at Athens, said you lov'd her :
I charg'd her humbly to receive the honour,

And hear your passion. Has she not, sir, obey'd me ?

Var. She has, I thank the gods ; but whither would'st
thou ?

Leon. Having resolv'd to visit Theodosius
You swore you would not go without my daughter,
Whereon I gave command that she should follow.

Var. Yes, Leontine, my old remembrancer,
Most learn'd of all philosophers, you did.

Leon. Thus long she has attended; you have seen
her,

Sounded her virtues and her imperfections;
Therefore, dread sir, forgive this bolder charge
Which honour sounds, and now let me demand you—

Var. Now help, Arantes, or I'm dash'd for ever.

Aran. Whatever happens, sir, disdain the marriage.

Leon. Can your high thoughts so far forget them-
selves

T' admit this humble virgin for your bride?

Var. Ha!

Athen. He blushes, gods! and stammers at the
question!

Leon. Why do you walk and chafe yourself, my lord?
The business is not much.

Var. How, Leontine!

Not much! I know that she deserves a crown;
Yet 't is to reason much, tho' not to love:
And sure the world would blush to see the daughter
Of a philosopher upon the throne of Cyrus.

Athen. Undone for ever!

Leon. Is this your answer, sir?

Var. Why dost thou urge me thus, and push me to
The very brink of glory? where, alas!
I look and tremble at the vast descent;
Yet e'en there to the vast bottom down
My rash advent'rer, Love, would have me leap,
And grasp my Athenais with my ruin.

Leon. 'Tis well, my lord——

Var. Why dost thou then provoke me?
I thought that Persia's court had store of honour
To satisfy the height of thy ambition.
Besides, old man, my love is too well grown
To want a tutor for his good behaviour;
What he will do he of himself will do,
And not be taught by you——

Leon. I know he will not;
Fond tears away; I know, I know he will not;
But he would buy with this old man's preferment
My daughter's shame.

Var. Away, I say! my soul disdains the motion.

Leon. The motion of a marriage—yes, I see it:
Your angry looks and haughty words betray it:
I found it at the first— I thank you, sir,
You have at last rewarded your old tutor
For all his cares, his watchings, services:
Yet let me tell you, sir, this humble maid,
This daughter of a poor philosopher,
Shall, if she please, be seated on a throne
As high as that of the immortal Cyrus.

Var. I think that age and deep philosophy
Have crack'd thy brain. Farewell, old Leontine;
Retire to rest; and when this brawling humour
Is rock'd asleep, I'll meet my Athenais,
And clear th' accounts of love which thou hast blotted.
[Exit.]

Leon. Old Leontine! Perhaps I'm mad indeed.
But hold, my heart, and let that solid virtue

Which I so long ador'd still keep the reins.
 Oh, Athenais! but I will not chide thee :
 Fate is in all our actions ; and methinks,
 At least a father judges so, it has
 Rebuk'd thee smartly for thy easiness :
 There is a kind of mournful eloquence
 In thy dumb grief which shames all clam'rous sorrow.

“ *Athen.* Alas! my breast is full of death ; methinks
 “ I fear ev'n you——

“ *Leon.* Why should thou fear thy father ?

“ *Athen.* Because you have the figure of a man!”
 Is there, oh speak ! a possibility
 To be forgiven ?

Leon. Thy father does forgive thee,
 And honour will ; but on this hard condition,
 Never to see him more——

Athen. See him! oh heavens!

Leon. Unless it be, my daughter, to upbraid him ;
 Not tho' he should repent and straight return.
 Nay, proffer thee his crown——No more of that.
 Honour too cries revenge, revenge thy wrongs,
 Revenge thyself, revenge thy injur'd father :
 For 'tis revenge so wise, so glorious too,
 As all the world shall praise——

Athen. Oh, give me leave,
 For yet I am all tenderness : the woman,
 The weak, the mild, the fond, the coward woman,
 Dares not look forth, but runs about my breast,
 And visits all the warmer mansions there,

Where she so oft has harbour'd false Varanes!
Cruel Varanes! false, forsworn Varanes!

Leon. Is this forgetting him? is this the course
Which honour bids thee take.

Athen. Ah, sir, allow
A little time for love to make his way:
Hardly he won the place, and many sighs,
And many tears, and thousand oaths, it cost him:
And oh! I find he will not be dislodg'd
Without a groan at parting hence for ever.
No, no! he vows he will not yet be rais'd
Without whole floods of grief at his farewell,
Which thus I sacrifice: and oh, I swear
Had he prov'd true, I would as easily
Have empty'd all my blood, and died to serve him
As now I shed these drops or vent these sighs,
To shew how well, how perfectly I lov'd him.

Leon. No woman sure but thou, so low in fortune;
Therefore the nobler is thy fair example,
Would thus have griev'd because a prince ador'd her;
Nor will it be believ'd in after-times
That there was ever such a maid in being:
Yet do I still advise preserve thy virtue;
And since he does disdain thee for his bride
Scorn thou to be——

Athen. Hold, sir; oh, hold, forbear,
For my nice soul abhors the very sound;
Yet with the shame of that, and the desire
Of an immortal name I am inspir'd:

All kinder thoughts are fled for ever from me ;
 All tenderness, as if I ne'er had lov'd,
 Has left my bosom colder than the grave.

Leon. Oh, Athenais ! on ; 't is bright before thee ;
 Pursue the track, and thou shalt be a star.

Athen. Oh, Leontine ! I swear, my noble father,
 That I will starve ere once forego my virtue :
 And thus let's join to contradict the world,
 That empire could not tempt a poor old man
 To sell his prince the honour of his daughter,
 And she too match'd the spirit of her father ;
 Tho' humbly born and yet more humbly bred,
 She for her fame refus'd a royal bed,
 Who tho' she lov'd yet did put off the hour,
 Nor could her virtue be betray'd by power.
 Patterns like these will guilty courts improve,
 And teach the fair to blush at conscious love :
 " Then let all maids for honour come in view,
 " If any maid can more for glory do."

ACT III.. SCENE I..

Enter VARANES and ARANTHES.

Varanes.

COME to my arms, my faithful, dear Arantes,
 Soft counsellor, companion of my youth !
 If I had longer been alone most sure,
 With the distraction that surrounds my heart,

My hand would have rebell'd against his master
And done a murder here.

Aran. The gods forbid!

Var. I swear I press thee with as hearty joy
“As ever fearful bride embrac'd her man
“When from a dream of death she wak'd, and found
“Her lover safe and sleeping by her side.”

Aran. The cause, my lord?

Var. Early thou know'st last night I went to rest;
But long, my friend, ere slumber clos'd my eyes,
Long was the combat fought 'twixt love and glory;
The fever of my passion burnt me up;
My pangs grew stronger, and my rack was doubled;
“My bed was all afloat with the cold drops
“That mortal pain wrung from my lab'ring limbs,
“My groans more deep than others' dying gasps;
Therefore I charge thee haste to her apartment;
“I do conjure thee tell her, tell her all
“My fears can urge or fondness can invent;
“Tell her how I repent; say any thing,
“For any thing I'll do to quench my fires:”
Say I will marry her now on the instant;
Say all that I would say, yet in the end
My love shall make it more than gods can utter.

Aran. My lord, both Leontine and she are gone
From their apartment——

Var. Ha! gone, say'st thou! whither?

Aran. That was my whole employment all this day;
But, sir, I grieve to speak it, they have left

No track behind for care to find them out ;
Nor is it possible——

Var. It is, it shall ;
I'll struggle with impossibilities
To find my Athenais : not the walls
Of Athens nor of Thebes shall hide her from me :
I'll bring the force of all my father's arms
And lay them waste but I'll redeem my love.
Oh, Leontine ! morose old Leontine !
Thou mere philosopher ! oh, cruel sage !
Who for one hasty word, one choleric doubt,
Hast turn'd the scale, tho' in the sacred balance
My life, my glory, and my empire hung !

Aran. Most sure, my lord, they are retir'd to
Athens.

I will send post to-night——

Var. No, no, Arantes ;
Prepare my chariots, for I'll go in person.
I swear 'till now, 'till I began to fear
Some other might enjoy my Athenais,
I swear I did not know how much I lov'd her.
But let's away ; I'll to the emperor,
Thou to the hasty management of business.
“ Prepare ; to-day I'll go, to-day I'll find her :
“ No more ; I'll take my leave of Theodosius,
“ And meet thee on the Hippodrome. Away ;”
Let the wild hurry of thy master's love
Make quick thy apprehension : haste, and leave me.

[*Excunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter PULCHERIA, ATTICUS, LEONTINE; Votaries leading ATHENAIS in Procession, after her Baptism, to be confirmed.

“ ATTICUS sings.

“ Oh, Chrysostom! look down and see

“ An off’ring worthy Heaven and thee!

“ So rich the victim, bright and fair,

“ That she on earth appears a star:

“ Chor. Eudisia is the virgin’s name,

“ And oftentimes shall sing her fame.

“ ATTICUS sings.

“ Lead her, Votaries, lead her in,

“ Her holy birth does now begin.

“ 1 Vot. In humble weeds, but clean array,

“ Your hours shall sweetly pass away,

“ And when the rites divine are past,

“ To pleasant gardens you shall haste.

“ 2 Vot. Where many a flow’ry bed we have,

“ That emblem still to each a grave;

“ And when within the stream we look,

“ With tears we use to swell the brook;

“ But oh! when in the liquid glass

“ Our heaven appears, we sigh to pass:

“ Chor. For heaven alone we are design’d,

“ And all things bring our heaven to mind.”

Athen. Oh, princess! oh! most worthy of the world,
That is submitted by it's emperor
To your most wise and providential sway!
What Greek or Roman eloquence can paint
The rapture and devotion of my soul!
I am adopted your's; you are my goddess,
That have new-form'd, new-moulded my conceptions,
"And by the platform of a work divine
"New-fram'd, new-built me to your own desires,
"Thrown all the lumber of my passions out,
"And made my heart a mansion of perfection!
"Clean as an anchoret's grot or votarist's cell,
"And spotless as the glories of his steps
"Whom we far oft' adore."

Pulch. Rise, Eudisia,
And let me fold my Christian in my arms:
With this dear pledge of an eternal love
I seal thee, oh Eudisia! mine for ever:
Accept, best charge, the vows of my affection,
For, by the sacred friendship that I give thee,
I think that Heaven by miracle did send thee
To ease my cares, to help me in my counsels,
To be my sister, partner in my bed,
And equally thro' my whole course of life
To be the better part of thy Pulcheria,
And share my griefs and joys.

Athen. No, madam, no;
Excuse the cares that this sad wretch must bring you:
"Oh! rather let me leave the world for ever;"
Or if I must partake your royal secrets,

“If you resolve to load me with such honour,”
Let it be far from cities, far from courts,
Where I may fly all human conversation,
Where I may never see, nor hear, nor name,
Nor think, nor dream, oh heaven! if possible,
Of mankind more.

“*Pulch.* What now! in tears Eudisia!

“*Athen.* Far from the guilt of palaces, oh, send me!
“Drive me, oh, drive me from the traitor man!
“So I might ’scape that monster, let me dwell
“In lions’ haunts or in some tiger’s den;
“Place me on some steep, craggy, ruin’d rock,
“That bellies out, just dropping in the ocean;
“Bury me in the hollow of its womb,
“Where, starving on my cold and flinty bed,
“I may from far, with giddy apprehension,
“See infinite fathoms down the rumbling deep;
“Yet not e’en there, in that vast whirl of death,
“Can there be found so terrible a ruin
“As man, false man, smiling, destructive man!”

Pulch. Then thou hast lov’d, Eudisia. Oh, my sister!
Still nearer to my heart, so much the dearer,
Because our fates are like, and hand in hand
Our fortunes lead us thro’ the maze of life:
I’m glad that thou hast lov’d; nay, lov’d with danger,
Since thou hast ’scap’d the ruin.—“Methinks it

lightens

“The weight of my calamities, that thou
“ (In all things else so perfect and divine)
“Art yet akin to my infirmity,

" And bear'st thy part in love's melodious ill ;
 " Love, that like bane perfum'd, infects the mind,
 " That sad delight that charms all womankind."

Athen. Yes, madam, I confess that love has charm'd
 me,

But never shall again : " no, I renounce him.
 " Inspire me all the wrongs of abus'd woman ;
 " All you that have been cozen'd by false men,
 " See what a strict example I will make ;
 " But for the perjuries of one I will revenge ye
 " For all that's past, that's present, and to come.

Pulch. " Oh, thou far more than the most mascu-
 line virtue !

" Where, our Astrea, where, oh, drowning brightness !
 " Where hast thou been so long ? Let me again
 " Protest my admiration and my love ;
 " Let me declare aloud, while thou art here,
 " While such clear virtue shines within our circle,
 " Vice shall no more appear within the palace,
 " But hide her dazzled eyes, and this be call'd
 " The holy court. But" lo ! the emp'ror comes :
 Beauty like thine may drive that far away
 That has so long entranc'd his soul.—My lord—

Enter THEODOSIUS and Attendants.

Theo. If yet, alas ! I might but hope to see her ;
 But oh ! forgive me, Heaven, this wilder start
 That thus would reach impossibility :
 No, no, I never must behold her more.

As well my Atticus might raise the dead,
As Leontine should charm that form in view.

Pulch. My lord, I come to give your grief a cure
With purer flames to draw that cruel fire
That tortur'd you so long——Behold this virgin——
The daughter of your tutor, Leontine.

Theo. Ah!

“*Pulch.* She is your sister's charge, and made a
Christian,

“And Athenais is Eudisia now :

“Be sure a fairer never grac'd religion,

“And for her virtue she transcends example.”

Theo. Oh, all you blest above! how can this be?
Am I awake? or is this possible? [*Athen. kneels.*

Pulch. She kneels, my lord; will not you go and
raise her?

Theo. Nay, do thou raise her, for I 'm rooted here;
Yet, if laborious love and melancholy
Have not o'ercome me, and quite turn'd me mad,
It must be she, that naked dazzling sweetness!
The very figure of that morning-star
That, dropping pearls and shedding dewy beams,
Fled from the greedy waves when I approach'd.
Answer me, Leontine; am I distracted,
Or is this true?——“By thee in all encounters
“I will be rul'd, in temperance and wildness,
“When reason clashes with extravagance.
“But speak”——

Leon. 'T is true, my lord; this is my daughter,
Whom I conceal'd in Persia from all eyes

But your's, when chance directed you that way.

Theo. He says 't is true : why then this heartless carriage,
This lazy spirit?

“ Oh, were I proof against the darts of love,
“ And cold to beauty as the marble lover
“ That lies without a thought upon his tomb,
“ Would not this glorious dawn of life run thro' me
“ And waken death itself !” Why am I slow then?

What hinders now but that in spite of rules
I burst thro' all the bands of death that hold me,
[*He kneels.*

And fly with such a haste to that appearance
As bury'd saints shall make at the last summons?

Athen. The emperor at my feet ! Oh, sir ! forgive me,
Drown me not thus with everlasting shame :
Both heaven and earth must blush at such a view,
Nor can I bear it longer——

Leon. My lord, she is unworthy——

Theo. Ha ! what say'st thou, Leontine ?
“ Unworthy ! oh, thou atheist to perfection !
“ All that the blooming earth could send forth fair,
“ All that the gaudy heavens could drop down
glorious !”

Unworthy, say'st thou ! Wert thou not her father
I swear I would revenge——But haste and tell me,
For love like mine will bear no second thought.

Can all the honours of the orient,
Thus sacrific'd with the most pure affection,
With spotless thoughts and languishing desires,

Obtain, oh, Leontine!—the crown at last—
To thee I speak—thy daughter to my bride?

Leon. My lord, the honour bears such estimation
It calls my blood into my aged cheeks,
And quite o'erwhelms my daughter with confusion,
Who with her body prostrate on the earth
Ought to adore you for the proffer'd glory.

Theo. Let me embrace and thank thee, oh, kind
Heaven!

Oh Atticus! Pulcheria! oh, my father!
Was ever change like mine? Run thro' the streets;
“Who waits there?” Run, and loud as fame can speak
With trumpet sounds proclaim your emperor's joy:
“And, as of old, on the great festival
“Of her they call the mother of the gods,
“Let all work cease, at least an oaken garland
“Crown each plebeian head; let sprightly bowls
“Be dol'd about, and the toss'd cymbals sound;
“Tell them their much lamented Theodosius
“By miracle is brought from death to life;
“His melancholy's gone, and now once more
“He shall appear at the state's helm again;
“Nor fear a wreck while this bright star directs us;
“For while she shines, no sands, no treach'rous rocks
“Shall lie unseen, but I will cut my way
“Secure as Neptune thro' the highest stream,
“And to the port in safety steer the world.”

Athen. Alas! my lord, consider my extraction,
With all my other wants——

Theo. Peace, empress, peace!

No more the daughter of old Leontine,
A Christian now, and partner of the east.

Athen. My father has dispos'd me, you command me;
What can I answer then but my obedience?

Theo. Attend her, dear Pulcheria! and oh, tell her
To-morrow, if she please, I will be happy.
Oh, why so long should I my joys delay?

[*Exeunt Pulch. and Athen.*

Time, imp thy wings, let not thy minutes stay,
But to a moment change the tedious day:
“The day! ’t will be an age before to-morrow:
“An age, a death, a vast eternity
“Where we shall cold and past enjoyment lie.”

Enter VARANES and ARANTHES.

Var. Oh, Theodosius!

Theo. Ha! my brother here!

Why dost thou come to make my bliss run o'er?
“What is there more to wish? Fortune can find
“No flaw in such a glut of happiness
“To let one misery in.”——Oh, my Varanes!
Thou that of late didst seem to walk on clouds,
Now give a loose, let go the slacken'd reins,
Let us drive down the precipice of joy,
As if that all the winds of heaven were for us.

Var. My lord, I'm glad to find the gale is turn'd,
And give you joy of this auspicious fortune.
Plough on your way with all your streamers out;
With all your glorious flags and garlands ride
Triumphant on——and leave me to the waves,

The sands, the winds, the rocks, the sure destruction
And ready gulfs that gape to swallow me.

Theo. It was thy hand that drew me from the grave,
Who had been dead by this time to ambition,
To crowns, to titles, and my slighted greatness :
But still, as if each work of thine deserv'd
The smile of Heaven——thy Theodosius met
With something dearer than his diadem,
With all that 's worth a wish, that 's worth a life ;
I met with that which made me leave the world.

Var. And I, oh turn of chance! oh cursed fortune!
Have lost at once all that could make me happy.
“ Oh, ye too partial powers ! but now no more :
“ The gods, my dear my most lov'd Theodosius,
“ Double all those joys that thou hast met upon thee !
“ For sure thou art most worthy, worthy more
“ Than Jove in all his prodigality
“ Can e'er bestow in blessings on mankind.”
And oh ! methinks my soul is strangely mov'd,
Takes it the more unkindly of her stars
That thou and I cannot be blest together ;
For I must leave thee, friend : this night must leave
thee,

To go in doubtful search of what, perhaps,
I ne'er shall find, if so my cruel fate
Has order'd it. Why then farewell for ever,
For I shall never never see thee more.

Theo. How sensible my tender soul is grown
Of what you utter ! Oh, my gallant friend !
Oh, brother ! oh, Varanes ! do not judge

By what I speak, for sighs will interrupt me :
 Judge by my tears, judge by these strict embraces.
 And by my last resolve : tho' I have met
 With what in silence I so long ador'd ;
 Tho' in the rapture of protesting joys,
 I had set down to-morrow for my nuptials,
 " And Atticus to-night prepares the temple,"
 Yet, my Varanes ! I will rob my soul
 Of all her health, of my imperial bride,
 And wander with thee in the search of that
 On which thy life depends——

Var. If this I suffer
 Conclude me then begotten of a hind,
 And bred in wilds : no, Theodosius, no ;
 I charge thee by our friendship, and conjure thee
 By all the gods, to mention this no more.
 Perhaps, dear friend ! I shall be sooner here
 Than you expect or I myself imagine :
 What most I grieve is that I cannot wait
 To see your nuptials ; yet my soul is with you,
 And all my adorations to your bride.

Theo. What, my Varanes ! will you be so cruel
 As not to see my bride before you go ?
 Or are you angry at your rival's charms,
 Who has already ravish'd half my heart,
 That once was all your own ?

Var. You know I am disordered ;
 My melancholy will not suit her blest condition.

[*Exit Theo.*

And the gods know since thou, my Athenais,

Art fled from these sick eyes, all other women
To my pall'd soul seem like the ghost of beauty,
And haunt my memory with the loss of thee.

Enter ATHENAI, THEODOSIUS *leading her.*

Theo. Behold, my lord, th' occasion of my joy.

Var. Oh, ye immortal gods! Arantes! oh!
Look there, and wonder. Ha! is't possible?

Athen. My lord, the emperor, says you are his friend;
He charges me to use my interest,
And beg of you to stay at least so long
As our espousals will be solemnizing:
I told him I was honour'd once to know you,
But that so slightly as I could not warrant
The grant of any thing that I should ask you——

Var. Oh heaven and earth! oh Athenais! why,
Why dost thou use me thus? Had I the world
Thou know'st it should be thine——

Athen. I know not that——
But yet, to make sure work, one half of it
Is mine already, sir, without your giving.
My lord, the prince is obstinate; his glory
Scorns to be mov'd by the weak breath of woman;
He is all hero, bent for higher views,
Therefore 't is noble, sir, to let him go:
If not for him, my lord, yet for myself
I must entreat the favour to retire. [*Exit Athen, &c.*

Var. Death and despair! confusion! hell, and furies!

Theo. "Heaven guard thy health, and still preserve
thy virtue;"

What should this mean? I fear the consequence,
For 't is too plain they know each other well.

Var. Undone Arantes! lost, undone for ever!
I see my doom, I read it with broad eyes,
As plain as if I saw the book of fate:
Yet I will muster all my spirits up,
Digest my grief, swallow the rising passions;
Yes, I will stand the shock of all the gods
Well as I can, and struggle for my life.

Theo. You muse, my lord; and if you 'll give me leave
To judge your thoughts, they seem employ'd at present
About my bride——“ I guess you know her too.”

Var. His bride! oh, gods! give me a moment's
patience.

I must confess the sight of Athenais,
Where I so little did expect to see her,
So grac'd, and so adorn'd, did raise my wonder:
But what exceeds all admiration is,
That you should talk of making her your bride;
'T is such a blind effect of monstrous fortune,
That tho' I well remember you affirm'd it
I cannot yet believe——

Theo. Then now believe me:
By all the powers divine I will espouse her.

Var. Ha! I shall leap the bounds. Come, come,
my lord,

By all these powers you nam'd I say you must not.

Theo. I say I will; and who shall bar my pleasure?
Yet more, I speak the judgment of my soul,
Weigh but with fortune, merit in the balance,
And Athenais loses by the marriage.

Var. Relentless fates! malicious cruel powers!
Oh, for what crime do you thus rack your creature?
Sir, I must tell you this unkingly meanness
Suits the profession of an anchorite well;
But in an Oriental emperor
It gives offence; nor can you, without scandal,
Without the notion of a grov'ling spirit,
Espouse the daughter of old Leontine,
Whose utmost glory is to 'ave been my tutor.

Theo. He has so well acquitted that employment,
Breeding you up to such a gallant height
Of full perfection and imperial greatness,
That ev'n for this respect, if for no other,
I will esteem him worthy while I live.

Var. My lord, you'll pardon me a little freedom;
For I must boldly urge in such a cause—
Whoever flatters you, tho' ne'er so near
Related to your blood, should be suspected.

Theo. If friendship would admit a cold suspicion,
After what I have heard and seen to-day,
Of all mankind I should suspect Varanes.

Var. He has stung me to the heart; my groans
will choke me,
Unless my struggling passion gets a vent.
Out with it then—I can no more dissemble—
Yes, yes, my lord! since you reduce me to
The last necessity I must confess it;
I must avow my flame for Athenais:
I am all fire, my passion eats me up,
It grows incorp'rate with my flesh and blood:

My pangs redouble; now they cleave my heart!
 Oh, Athenais! oh, Eudisia!——Oh!——

“Tho’ plain as day I see my own destruction,

“Yet to my death, and oh, let all the gods

“Bear witness! still I swear I will adore thee!”

Theo. Alas, Varanes! which of us two the heavens
 Have mark’d for death is yet above the stars;
 But while we live let us preserve our friendship.
 Sacred and just, as we have ever done.

This only mean in two such hard extremes
 Remains for both: to-morrow you shall see her
 With all advantage in her own apartment;
 Take your own time; say all you can to gain her;
 If you can win her, lead her into Persia;
 If not, consent that I espouse her here.

Var. Still worse and worse! Oh, Theodosius! oh,
 I cannot speak for sighs; my death is seal’d
 By his last sweetness: had you been less good
 I might have hop’d; but now my doom’s at hand.
 Go then and take her, take her to the temple;
 The gods too give you joy! Oh, Athenais!
 Why does thy image mock my foolish sorrow?
 Oh, Theodosius! do not see my tears:
 Away and leave me; leave me to the grave.

Theo. Farewell; let’s leave the issue to the heavens;
 I will prepare your way with all that honour
 Can urge in your behalf, tho’ to my ruin. [*Exit Theo.*]

Var. Oh, I could tear my limbs and eat my flesh!
 Fool that I was, fond, proud, vain-glorious fool!
 Damn’d be all courts, and trebly damn’d ambition!

Blasted be thy remembrance! curses on thee!
And plagues on plagues fall on those fools that seek
thee!

Aran. Have comfort, sir——

Var. Away and leave me villain!

Traitor, who wrought me first to my destruction!—
Yet stay and help, help me to curse my pride,
Help me to wish that I had ne'er been royal,
That I had never heard the name of Cyrus,
“That my first brawl in court had been my last.”
Oh that I had been born some happy swain,
And never known a life so great, so vain!
Where I extremes might not be forc'd to choose,
And blest with some mean wife no crown could lose,
Where the dear partner of my little state,
With all her smiling offspring at the gate,
Blessing my labours might my coming wait;
Where in our humble beds all safe might lie,
And not in cursed court for glory die—— [*Exeunt.*

SONG.

“Hail to the myrtle shade,
“All hail to the nymphs of the fields;
“Kings would not here invade
“Those pleasures that virtue yields.

“Chor. Beauty here opens her arms,
“To soften the languishing mind,
“And Phillis unlocks her charms:
“Ah, Phillis! why so kind?

“ *Phillis, thou soul of love,*
 “ *Thou joy of the neigh’bring swains;*
 “ *Phillis that crowns the grove,*
 “ *And Phillis that gilds the plains:*

“ *Chor. Phillis, that ne’er had the skill*
 “ *To paint, and to patch, and be fine;*
 “ *Yet Phillis whose eyes can kill,*
 “ *Whom nature hath made divine:*
 “ *Phillis, whose charming song*
 “ *Makes labour and pains a delight:*
 “ *Phillis, that makes the day young,*
 “ *And shortens the live-long night:*

“ *Chor. Phillis, whose lips like May,*
 “ *Still laughs at the sweets they bring,*
 “ *Where love never knows decay,*
 “ *But sets with eternal spring.”*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Enter MARCIAN and LUCIUS, at a distance.

Marcian.

THE general of the Oriental armies
 Was a commission large as fate could give:
 ’Tis gone. “ *Why, what care I? Oh, Fortune!*
 Fortune!
 “ *Thou laughing empress of this busy world,*

“Marcian defies thee now”——

Why what a thing is a discarded favourite !

“He who but now, tho’ longing to retire,

“Could not for busy waiters be alone,

“Throng’d in his chamber, haunted to his closet

“With a full crowd and an eternal court !”

When once the favour of his prince is turn’d,

Shun’d as a ghost the clouded man appears,

And all the gaudy worshippers forsake him.

“So fares it now with me ; where’er I come,

“As if I were another Catiline ;

“The Courtiers rise, and no man will sit near me :

“As if the plague were on me all men fly me.”

Oh, Lucius ! Lucius ! if thou leav’st me too

I think, I think, I could not bear it,

But like a slave my spirit, broke with suff’ring,

Should on these coward knees fall down, and beg

Once to be great again——

Luc. Forbid it, Heaven !

That e’er the noble Marcian condescend

To ask of any but th’ immortal gods !

Nay, I vow, if yet your spirit dare,

Spite of the court you shall be great as Cæsar.

“*Mar.* No, Lucius, no ; the gods repel that humour.

“Yet since we are alone, and must ere long

“Leave this bad court, let us like veterans

“Speak out—Thou say’st, alas ! as great as Cæsar ;

“But where’s his greatness ? where is his ambition ?

“If any sparks of virtue yet remain

“In this poor figure of the Roman glory ;

“ I say if any be, how dim they shine
 “ Compar’d with what his great forefathers were !
 “ How should he lighten then or awe the world
 “ Whose soul in courts is but a lambent fire ?
 “ And scarce, oh Rome ! a glowworm in the field,
 “ Soft, young, religious—godlike qualities !
 “ For one that should recover the lost empire,
 “ And wade thro’ seas of blood and walk o’er moun-
 tains

“ Of slaughter’d bodies to immortal honour.”

Luc. Poor heart ! he pin’d a while ago for love—

Mar. And for his mistress vow’d to leave the world ;
 But some new chance it seems has chang’d his mind.
 A marriage ! but to whom, or whence she came,
 None knows ; but yet a marriage is proclaim’d,
 Pageants prepar’d, the arches are adorn’d,
 “ The statues crown’d, the Hippodrome does groan
 “ Beneath the burden of the mounted warriors :”

The theatre is open’d too, where he
 And the hot Persian mean to act their follies.
 Gods ! gods ! is this the image of our Cæsars ?
 Is this the model of our Romulus ?

Oh why so poorly have you stamp’d Rome’s glory !
 “ Not Rome’s but your’s—Is this man fit to bear it,
 “ This waxen portraiture of majesty,
 “ Which ev’ry warmer passion does melt down,
 “ And makes him fonder than a woman’s longing ?”

Luc. Thus much I know to the eternal shame
 Of the imperial blood ; this upstart empress,
 This fine new queen, is sprung from abject parents,

Nay, basely born: but that's all one to him;
He likes and loves, and therefore marries her.

Mar. Shall I not speak, shall I not tell him of it?
I feel this big-swol'n throbbing Roman spirit
Will burst unless I utter what I ought.

Enter PULCHERIA with a Paper in her hand, and JULIA.

Mar. Pulcheria here! why she's the scourge of
Marcian;

I tremble too whenever she approaches,

“And my heart dances an unusual measure:

“Spite of myself I blush, and cannot stir

“While she is here”—What, Lucius, can this mean?

“’Tis said Calphurnia had the heart of Cæsar,

“Augustus doted on the subtile Livia,

“Why then should not I worship that fair angel?

“Oh! didst thou mark her when her fury lighten’d?

“She seem’d all goddess, nay, her frowns became her:

“There was a beauty in her very wildness.

“Were I a man born great as our first founder,

“Sprung from the blood divine—but I am cast

“Beyond all possibility of hope.”

Pulch. Come hither Marcian, read this paper o’er,

And mark the strange neglect of Theodosius:

He signs whate’er I bring; perhaps you’ve heard

To-morrow he intends to wed a maid of Athens,

New-made a Christian, and new-nam’d Eudisia,

Whom he more dearly prizes than his empire;

Yet in this paper he hath set his hand,

And seal’d it too with the imperial signet,

That she shall lose her head to-morrow morning.

Mar. 'Tis not for me to judge; yet this seems strange.

Pulch. I know he rather would commit a murder
On his own person than permit a vein
Of her to bleed; yet, Marcian, what might follow
If I were envious of this virgin's honour
By his rash passing whatsoe'er I offer——
Without a view—Ha! but I had forgot:
Julia, let's haste from this infectious person——
I had forgot that Marcian was a traitor:
“ Yet by the powers divine I swear 'tis pity
“ That one so form'd by nature for all honour,
“ All titles, greatness, dignities imperial,
“ The noblest person, and the bravest courage,
“ Should not be honest. Julia, is 't not pity!”
Oh, Marcian! Marcian! I could weep to think
Virtue should lose itself as thine has done.
Repent, rash man! if yet 't is not too late,
And mend thy errors; so farewell for ever.

[*Exeunt Pulch. and Julia.*]

Mar. Farewell for ever! no, madam, ere I go
I am resolv'd to speak, and you shall hear me;
Then if you please take off this traitor's head:
End my commission and my life together.

Luc. Perhaps you'll doubt of what I'm going to say;
But by your life my lord I think 't is true;
Pulcheria loves this traitor: “ Did you mark her?”
“ At first she had forgot your banishment;
“ Makes you her counsellor, and tells her secrets
“ As to a friend; nay, leaves them in your hand,

“ And says ’t is pity that you are not honest,
 “ With such description of your gallantry
 “ As none but love could make ; then taking leave,
 “ Thro’ the dark lashes of her darting eyes
 “ Methought she shot her soul at ev’ry glance,
 “ Still looking back, as if she had a mind
 “ That you should know she left her heart behind her.”

Mar. Alas ! thou dost not know her, nor do I,
 Nor can the wit of all mankind conceive her.
 But let ’s away. This paper is of use.

Luc. I guess your purpose :
 He is a boy, and as a boy you ’ll use him—
 There is no other way.

Mar. Yes, if he be not
 Quite dead with sleep, for ever lost to honour,
 Marcian with this shall rouse him. Oh, my Lucius !
 Methinks the ghosts of the great Theodosius
 And thund’ring Constantine appear before me ;
 They charge me as a soldier to chastise him,
 To lash him with keen words from lazy love,
 And show him how they trod the paths of honour. [Ex.

SCENE II.

THEODOSIUS lying on a Couch, with two Boys drest like
 Cupids singing to him as he sleeps.

SONG.

“ Happy day ! ah, happy day !
 “ That Cæsar’s beams did first display ;

“ *So peaceful was the happy day,*
 “ *The gods themselves did all look down*
 “ *The royal infant’s birth to crown,*
 “ *So pleas’d they scarce did on the guilty frown.*
 “ *Happy day! ah, happy day!*
 “ *And oh, thrice happy hour!*
 “ *That made such goodness master of such power;*
 “ *For thus the gods declare to men,*
 “ *No day like this shall ever come again.”*

Enter MARCIAN with an Order.

“ *Theo.* Ha! what rash thing art thou who set’s so
 small
 “ A value on thy life thus to presume
 “ Against the fatal orders I have given,
 “ Thus to entrench on Cæsar’s solitude,
 “ And urge me to thy ruin?
 “ *Mar.* Mighty Cæsar!
 “ I have transgress’d, and for my pardon bow
 “ To thee as to the gods when I offend;
 “ Nor can I doubt your mercy, when you know
 “ The nature of my crime. I am commission’d
 “ From all the earth to give thee thanks and praises,
 “ Thou darling of mankind! whose conqu’ring arms
 “ Already drown the glory of great Julius,
 “ Whose deeper reach in laws and policy
 “ Makes wise Augustus envy thee in heaven.
 “ What mean the fates by such prodigious virtue?
 “ When scarce the manly down yet shades thy face,
 “ With conquest thus to over-run the world,

“ And make barbarians tremble ? Oh, ye gods !

“ Should destiny now end thee in thy bloom ;

“ Methinks I see thee mourn’d above the loss

“ Of lov’d Germanicus, thy funerals,

“ Like his, are solemniz’d with tears and blood.

“ *Theo.* How, Marcian !

“ *Mar.* Yes, the raging multitude,

“ Like torrents, set no bound to their mad grief,

“ Shave their wives’ heads, and tear off their own hair ;

“ With wild despair they bring their infants out

“ To brawl their parent’s sorrow in the streets :

“ Trade is no more, all courts of justice stopp’d ;

“ With stones they dash the windows of their temples,

“ Pull down their altars, break their household gods,

“ And still the universal groan is this,

“ Constantinople’s lost, our empire’s ruin’d :

“ Since he is gone, that father of his country,

“ Since he is dead, oh, life ! where is thy pleasure ?

“ Oh, Rome ! oh, conquer’d world ! where is thy glory ?

“ *Theo.* I know thee well, thy custom and thy
manners ;

“ Thou dost upbraid me ; but no more of this,

“ Not for thy life——

“ *Mar.* What’s life without my honour ?

“ Could you transform yourself into a Gorgon,

“ Or make that beardless face like Jupiter’s,

“ I would be heard in spite of all your thunder.

“ Oh, power of guilt ! you fear to stand the test

“ Which virtue brings ; like sores your vices shake

“ Before this Roman healer : but, by the gods,

“ Before I go I’ll rip the malady,
 “ And let the venom flow before your eyes :
 “ This is a debt to the great Theodosius,
 “ The grandfather of your illustrious blood,
 “ And then farewell for ever.

“ *Theo.* Presuming Marcian !

“ What canst thou urge against my innocence ?
 “ Thro’ the whole course of all my harmless youth,
 “ Ev’n to this hour, I cannot call to mind
 “ One wicked act which I have done to shame me.

“ *Mar.* This may be true ; yet if you give the sway
 “ To other hands, and your poor subjects suffer,
 “ Your negligence to them is as the cause.

“ Oh, Theodosius ! credit me who knows
 “ The world, and hear our soldiers censure kings.
 “ In aftertimes, if thus you should go on,
 “ Your memory by warriors will be scorn’d,
 “ As Nero or as Caligula loath’d ;
 “ They will despise your sloth and backward ease
 “ More than they hate the others’ cruelty.

“ And what a thing, ye gods, is scorn or pity !
 “ Heap on me, Heaven, the hate of all mankind,
 “ Load me with malice, envy, detestation,
 “ Let me be horrid to all apprehension,
 “ And the world shun me, so I ’scape but scorn.

“ *Theo.* Pr’y thee no more.

“ *Mar.* Nay, when the legions make comparisons,
 “ And say thus cruel Nero once resolv’d
 “ On Galba’s insurrection for revenge,
 “ To give all France as plunder to the arms,

“ To poison the whole senate at a feast,
“ To burn the city, turn the wild beasts out,
“ Bears, lions, tigers, on the multitude,
“ That so obstructing those that quench’d the fire
“ He might at once destroy rebellious Rome.

“ *Theo.* Oh, cruelty! why tell’st thou me of this?

“ Am I of such a bloody, barb’rous temper?

“ *Mar.* Yet some will say this show’d he had a spirit,

“ However fierce, avenging, and pernicious—

“ That favour’d of a Roman: but for you,

“ What can your partial sycophants invent,

“ To make you room among the emperors,

“ Whose utmost is the smallest part of Nero,

“ A petty player—one who can act the hero,

“ And never be one. Oh, ye immortal gods!

“ Is this the old Cæsarian majesty?

“ Now in the name of our great Romulus

“ Why sing you not and fiddle too as he did?

“ Why have ye not, like Nero, a phenascus,

“ One to take care of your celestial voice:

“ Lie on your back, my lord, and on your stomach

“ Lay a thin plate of lead—abstain from fruits;

“ And when the business of the stage is done

“ Retire with your loose friends to costly banquets;

“ While the lean army groans upon the ground.

“ *Theo.* Leave me, I say, lest I chastise thee:

“ Hence, begone, I say——

“ *Mar.* Not ’till you have heard me out——

“ Build too, like him, a palace lin’d with gold,

“ As long and large as that to the Esquiline:

- “ Enclose a pool too in it like the sea,
 “ And at the empire’s cost let navies meet;
 “ Adorn your starry chambers too with gems;
 “ Contrive the plated ceilings to turn round,
 “ With pipes to cast ambrosian oils upon you;
 “ Consume with this prodigious vanity
 “ In mere perfumes and odorous distillations
 “ Of sesterces at once four hundred millions;
 “ Let naked virgins wait you at your table,
 “ And wanton Cupids dance and clap their wings;
 “ No matter what becomes of the poor soldiers,
 “ So they perform the drudgery they are fit for;
 “ Why, let ’em starve for want of their arrears,
 “ Drop as they go, and lie, like dogs, in ditches.
 “ *Theo.* Come, you are a traitor—
 “ *Mar.* Go to, you are a boy—
 “ Or by the gods—
 “ *Theo.* If arrogance-like this,
 “ And to the emperor’s face, should’scape unpunish’d
 “ I’ll write myself a coward—Die then a villain,
 “ A death too glorious for so bad a man,
 “ By Theodosius’ hand.

[*Marcian disarms him, but is wounded.*]

- “ *Mar.* Now, sir, where are you?
 “ What in the name of all our Roman spirits
 “ Now charms my hand from giving thee thy fate?
 “ Has he not cut me off from all my honours—
 “ Torn my commissions, sham’d me to the earth,
 “ Banish’d the court, a vagabond for ever?
 “ Do not the soldiers hourly ask it from me,

- “ Sigh their own wrongs, and beg me to revenge’em?
“ What hinders now but that I mount the throne
“ And make to that this purple youth my footstool :
“ The armies court me and my country’s cause ;
“ The injuries of Rome and Greece persuade me.
“ Shew but this Roman blood which he has drawn,
“ They’ll make me emperor whether I will or no.
“ Did not for less than this the latter Brutus,
“ Because he thought Rome wrong’d, in person head
“ Against his friend a black conspiracy,
“ And stab the majesty of all the world?
“ *Theo.* Act as you please, I am within your power.
“ *Mar.* Did not the former Brutus for the crime
“ Of Sextus, drive old Tarquin from his kingdom ?
“ And shall this prince too, by permitting others
“ To act their wicked will and lawless pleasures,
“ Ravish from the empire it’s dear health,
“ Well-being, happiness, and ancient glory,
“ Go on in this dishonourable rest ?
“ Shall he, I say, dream on while the starv’d troops
“ Lie cold and waking in the wintercamp ;
“ And like pin’d birds for want of sustenance
“ Feed on the haws and berries of the field ?
“ Oh, temper, temper me, ye gracious gods !
“ Give to my hand forbearance, to my heart
“ It’s constant loyalty—I would but shake him,
“ Rouse him a little from this death of honour,
“ And show him what he should be. [*Aside,*
“ *Theo.* You accuse me
“ As if I were some monster most unheard of,

“ First as the ruin of the army, then
 “ Of taking your commission; but, by heaven
 “ I swear, oh, Marcian! this I never did,
 “ Nor e’er intended it; nor say I this
 “ To alter thy stern usage; for with what
 “ Thou’st said or done, and brought to my remem-
 brance,

“ I grow already weary of my life.

“ *Mar.* My lord, I take your word—You do not
 know

“ The wounds which rage within your country’s bowels,
 “ The horrid usage of the suff’ring soldier;
 “ But why will not our Theodosius know?
 “ If you entrust the government to others
 “ That act these crimes who but yourself’s to blame?
 “ Be witnesses, ye gods! of my plain dealing,
 “ Of Marcian’s honesty, howe’er degraded.
 “ I thank you for my banishment; but, alas!
 “ My loss is little to what soon will follow;
 “ Reflect but on yourself and your own joys;
 “ Let not this lethargy for ever hold you.
 “ ’T was rumour’d thro’ the city that you lov’d,
 “ That your espousals should be solemniz’d;
 “ When on a sudden here you send your orders
 “ That this bright favourite, the lov’d Eudisia;
 “ Should lose her head.

“ *Theo.* Oh, heaven and earth! what say’st thou?

“ That I have seal’d the death of my Eudisia?

“ *Mar.* ’T is your own hand and signet: yet I swear,

“ Tho’ you have given to female hands the sway,

“ And therefore I as well as the whole army
 “ For ever ought to curse all womankind ;
 “ Yet when the virgin came, as she was doom’d,
 “ And on the scaffold, for that purpose rais’d,
 “ Without the walls appear’d before the army——

“ *Theo.* What ! on a scaffold ? Hal before the
 army ?

“ *Mar.* How quickly was the tide of fury turn’d
 “ To soft compassion and relenting tears ! but when
 the axe

“ Sever’d the brightest beauty of the earth
 “ From that fair body ; had you heard the groan,
 “ Which like a peal of distant thunder ran
 “ Thro’ all the arm’d host, you would have thought,
 “ By the immediate darkness that fell round us,
 “ Whole nature was concern’d at such a suffering,
 “ And all the gods were angry.

“ *Theo.* Oh, Pulcheria !
 “ Cruel, ambitious sister, this must be
 “ Thy doing ! Oh, support me, noble Marcian !
 “ Now, now’s the time, if thou dar’st strike : behold
 “ I offer thee my breast ; with my last breath
 “ I’ll thank thee too if now thou draw’st my blood.
 “ Were I to live, thy counsel should direct me ;
 “ But ’t is too late——— [He swoons.

“ *Mar.* He faints ! What, ho there, Lucius !

Enter LUCIUS.

“ My lord the emperor, Eudisia lives !
 “ She’s here, or will be in a minute—moment ;

“ Quick as a thought she calls you to the temple.

“ Oh, Lucius! help—I’ve gone too far—But see,

“ He breathes again—Eudisia has awak’d him.

“ *Theo.* Did you not name Eudisia?

“ *Mar.* Yes, she lives;

“ I did but feign the story of her death

“ To find how near you plac’d her to your heart!

“ And may the gods rain all their plagues upon me

“ If ever I rebuke you thus again:

“ Yet ’t is most certain that you sign’d her death,

“ Not knowing what the wise Pulcheria offer’d,

“ Who left it in my hand to startle you;

“ But by my life and fame I did not think

“ It would have touch’d your life. Oh, pardon me,

“ Dear prince! my lord, my emperor, royal
master!

“ Droop not because I utter’d some rash words,

“ And was a madman—By th’ immortal gods

“ I love you as my soul: whate’er I said

“ My thoughts were otherwise; believe these tears,

“ Which do not use to flow, all shall be well;

“ I swear that there are seeds in that sweet temper

“ T’ atone for all the crimes in this bad age.

“ *Theo.* I thank thee—first for my Eudisia’s life:

“ What but my love could have call’d back that life

“ Which thou hast made me hate? And oh, me—
thought

“ ’T was hard, dear Marcian! very hard from thee

“ From him I ever rev’renc’d as my father,

“ To hear so harsh a message—But no more;

“ *Mar.* H iij

“ We ’re friends—thy hand—Nay, if thou wilt not
rise

“ And let me fold my arms about thy neck,

“ I’ll not believe thy love—In this forgive me :

“ First let me wed Eudosia and we ’ll out ;

“ We will, my general, and make amends

“ For all that ’s past—Glory and arms ye call !

“ And Marcian leads me on—

“ *Mar.* Let her not rest then—

“ Espouse her straight ; I ’ll strike you at a heat :

“ May this great humour get large growth within you,

“ And be encourag’d by th’ embold’ning gods.

“ Oh what a sight will this be to the soldier,

“ To see me bring you dress’d in shining armour.

“ To head the shouting squadrons !—Oh, ye gods

“ Methinks I hear the echoing cries of joy,

“ The sound of trumpets and the beat of drums—

“ I see each starving soldier bound from earth,

“ As if some god by miracle had rais’d him,

“ And with beholding you grow fat again.

“ Nothing but gazing eyes and op’ning mouths,

“ Cheeks red with joy and lifted hands about you ;

“ Some wiping the glad tear that trickle down

“ With broken Ios, and with sobbing raptures

“ Crying, to arms, he ’s come, our emperor’s come

“ To win the world !—Why, is not this better

“ Than lolling in a lady’s lap, and sleeping,

“ Fasting or praying ? Come, come, you shall be
merry ;

“ And for Eudosia she is your’s already :

“ Marcian has said it, sir ; she shall be your’s.

“ *Theo.* Oh, Marcian ; oh, my brother, father, all !
 “ Thou best of friends, most faithful counsellor
 “ I’ll find a match for thee too ere I rest,
 “ To make thee love me ; for when thou art with me
 “ I’m strong and well, but when thou’rt gone I’m
 nothing.

Enter ATHENAIS meeting THEODOSIUS.

Theo. Alas, Eudisia ! tell me what to say ;
 For my full heart can scarce bring forth a word
 Of that which I have sworn to see perform’d.

Athen. I’m perfectly obedient to your pleasure.

Theo. Well then, I come to tell thee that Varanes
 Of all mankind is nearest to my heart :
 I love him, dear Eudisia ! and to prove
 That love on trial all my blood’s too little :
 Ev’n thee, if I were sure to die this moment,
 (As Heaven alone can tell how far my fate
 Is off) oh ! thou my soul’s most tender joy,
 With my last breath I would bequeath him thee.

Athen. Then you are pleas’d, my lord, to yield me
 to him.

Theo. No, my Eudisia, no ; I will not yield thee.
 While I have life ; for worlds I will not yield thee :
 Yet thus far I’m engag’d to let thee know
 He loves thee, Athenais, more than ever ;
 He languishes, despairs, and dies, like me,
 And I have pass’d my word that he shall see thee.

Theo. Ah, sir ! what have you done against yourself
 And me !——

“ Why will you trust me, who am now afraid
 “ To trust myself?—why do you leave me naked
 “ To an assault, who had made proof my virtue
 “ With this sure guard never to see him more?”
 For oh! with trembling agonies I speak it,
 I cannot see a prince whom once I lov’d
 Bath’d in his grief, and gasping at my feet
 “ In all the violent trances of despair,”
 Without a sorrow that perhaps may end me.

Theo. Oh, ye severer powers! too cruel fate!
 Did ever love tread such a maze before?
 Yet, Athenais, still I trust thy virtue;
 But if thy bleeding heart cannot refrain,
 Give, give thyself away; yet still remember
 That moment Theodosius is no more——

[*Exit Theo.*]

Athen. Now glory, now, if ever thou did’st work
 In woman’s mind assist me—“ Oh, my heart!
 “ Why dost thou throb as if thou wert a breaking?
 “ Down, down, I say; think on thy injuries,
 “ Thy wrongs, thy wrongs—’Tis well my eyes are dry,
 “ And all within my bosom now is still.”

Enter VARANES leaning on ARANTHES.

Ha! is this he! or is’t Varanes’ ghost?
 He looks as if he had bespoke his grave,
 Trembling and pale. I must not dare to view him;
 For oh! I feel his melancholy here,
 And fear I shall too soon partake his sickness.

Var. Thus to the angry gods offending mortals,

Made sensible by some severe affliction
 How all their crimes are register'd in Heaven,
 " In that nice court where no rash words escapes,
 " But ev'n extravagant thoughts are all set down;"
 Thus the poor penitents with fear approach
 The rev'rend shrines, and thus for mercy bow; [*Kneels.*
 Thus melting too they wash the hallow'd earth,
 And groan to be forgiven——
 Oh empress! oh Eudisia! such you're now:
 These are your titles, and I must not dare
 Ever to call thee Athenais more.

Athen. Rise, rise, my lord, let me entreat you rise;
 I will not hear you in that humble posture;
 Rise, or I must withdraw——The world will blush
 For you and me, should it behold a prince
 Sprung from immortal Cyrus on his knees
 Before the daughter of a poor philosopher.

Var. 'Tis just, ye righteous gods! my doom is
 just;
 Nor will I strive to deprecate her anger.
 If possible I'll aggravate my crimes,
 That she may rage 'till she has broke my heart;
 'Tis all I now desire——" and let the gods,
 " Those cruel gods that join to my undoing,
 " Be witnesses, to this unnatural wish,"
 Is to fall dead without a groan before her.

Athen. Oh, ye known sounds! but I must steel my
 soul. [*Aside.*
 " Methinks these robes, my Delia, are too heavy."

Var. Not worth a word, a look, or one regard!

“ Is then the nature of my fault so heinous ;
“ That when I come to take my eternal leave
“ You’ll not vouchsafe to view me ? This is scorn
“ Which the fair soul of gentle Athenais
“ Would ne’er have harbour’d——
“ Oh ! for the sake of him whom you ere long
“ Shall hold as fast as now your wishes form him,”

Give me a patient hearing ; for however
I talk of death, and seem to loathe my life,
I would deliberate with my fate a while,
With snatching glances eye thee to the last,
Pause o’er a loss like that of Athenais,
And parley with my ruin.

Athen. Speak, my lord ;
To hear you is the emperor’s command !
And for that cause I readily obey.

Var. The emperor, the emperor’s command !
And for that cause she readily obeys !
I thank you, madam, that on any terms
You condescend to hear me——
Know then, Eudisia, ah, rather let me call thee
By the lov’d name of Athenais still !
“ That name which I so often have invok’d,
“ And which was once auspicious to my vows,
“ So oft at midnight sigh’d among the groves,
“ The river’s murmur, and the echo’s burden,
“ Which every bird could sing and wind did bear ;
“ By that dear name I make this protestation,
“ By all that’s good on earth or bless’d in Heaven,”
I swear I love thee more, far more, than ever ;

With conscious blushes too, here help me gods!
 Help me to tell her, tho' to my confusion
 And everlasting shame, yet I must tell her,
 I lay the Persian crown before her feet.

Athen. My lord, I thank you, and to express those
 thanks

As nobly as you offer 'em I return
 The gift you make; nor will I now upbraid you
 With the example of the emperor;
 Not but I know 't is that that draws you on
 Thus to descend beneath your majesty
 And swell the daughter of a poor philosopher
 With hopes of being great.

Var. Ah, madam! ah! you wrong me: by the
 gods

I had repented ere I knew the emperor——

Athen. You find, perhaps too late, that Athenais,
 However slighted for her birth and fortune;
 Has something in her person and her virtue
 Worth the regard of emperors themselves;
 And to return the compliment you gave
 My father, Leontine, that poor philosopher,
 Whose utmost glory is to 'ave been your tutor,
 I here protest, by virtue and by glory,
 I swear by heaven and all the powers divine,
 Th' abandon'd daughter of that poor old man
 Shall ne'er be seated on the throne of Cyrus.

Var. Oh, death to all my hopes! what hast thou
 sworn

To turn me wild? Ah, cursed throne of Cyrus!
Would thou had'st been o'erturn'd and laid in dust,
His crown too thunderstruck, my father, all
The Persian race, like poor Darius ruin'd.
Blotted, and swept for ever from the world,
When first ambition blasted thy remembrance——

Athen. Oh, Heaven! I had forgot the base affront
Offer'd by this proud man; a wrong so great
It is remov'd beyond all hope of mercy:
He had design'd to bribe my father's virtue,
And by unlawful means——

Fly from my sight, lest I become a fury,
And break those rules of temp'rance I propos'd:
Fly, fly, Varanes! fly this sacred place,
Where virtue and religion are profess'd;

“ This city will not harbour infidels,

“ Traitors to chastity, licentious princes:

“ Begone I say; thou canst not here be safe:”

Fly to imperial libertines abroad;

In foreign courts thou 'lt find a thousand beauties

That will comply for gold—for gold they 'll weep,

For gold be fond as Athenais was,

And charm thee still as if they lov'd indeed.

“ Thou 'lt find enough companions too for riot,

“ Luxuriant all, and royal as thyself;

“ Tho' thy loud vices should resound to heaven.

“ Art thou not gone yet?

Var. “ No, I am charm'd to hear you.

“ Oh! from my soul I do confess myself

“ The very blot of honour—I am more black
 “ Than thou in all thy heat of just revenge,
 “ With all thy glorious eloquence can make me.”

Athen. Away, Varanes!

Var. Yes, madam, I am going——

Nay, by the gods I do not ask thee pardon,
 Nor while I live will I implore thy mercy;
 But when I 'm dead, if as thou dost return
 With happy Theodosius from the temple—
 If as thou goest in triumph through the streets,
 Thou chance to meet the cold Varanes there,
 Borne by his friends to his eternal home,
 Stop then, oh Athenais! and behold me;
 Say as thou hang'st about the emp'ror's neck,
 Alas! my lord! this sight is worth our pity.
 If to those pitying words thou add a tear,
 Or give one parting groan——if possible,
 If the good gods will grant my soul the freedom;
 I 'll leave my shroud, and wake from death to thank
 thee.

Athen. He shakes my resolution from the bottom;
 My bleeding heart too speaks in his behalf,
 And says my virtue has been too severe.

Var. Farewell, oh empress! no Athenais now;
 I will not call thee by that tender name,
 Since cold despair begins to freeze my bosom,
 And all my pow'rs are now resolv'd on death.
 “ 'Tis said that from my youth I have been rash,
 “ Choleric and hot; but let the gods now judge
 “ By my last wish if ever patient man

“ Did calmly bear so great a loss as mine ?
Since 't is so doom'd by fate you must be wedded
For your own peace, when I am laid in earth,
Forget that e'er Varanes had a being ;
Turn all your soul to Theodosius' bosom :
Continue, gods ! their days, and make them long ;
Lucina wait upon their fruitful Hymen,
And many children beauteous as the mother,
And pious as the father, make 'em smile.

Athen. Oh, Heav'ns !

Var. Farewell—I 'll trouble you no more ;
The malady that 's lodg'd within grows stronger ;
I feel the shock of my approaching fate ;
My heart too trembles at his distant march ;
Nor can I utter more if you should ask me.
Thy arm Arantes—Oh, farewell for ever!—

Athen. Varanes, stay ; and ere you go for ever
Let me unfold my heart.

Var. O Athenais !
What further cruelty hast thou in store
To add to what I suffer ?

Athen. Since 't is doom'd
That we must part, let 's part as lovers should,
As those that have lov'd long and loved well.

Var. Art thou so good, oh ! Athenais, oh !

Athen. First, from my soul I pity and forgive you ;
I pardon you that hasty little error,
Which yet has been the cause of both our ruins :
And let this sorrow witness for my heart
How eagerly I wish it had not been ;

And since I cannot keep it, take it all ;
Take all the love, oh, prince ! I ever bore you ;

“ Or if ’t is possible I ’ll give you more :

“ Your noble carriage forces this confession,

“ I rage, I burn, I bleed, I die, for love !

“ I am distracted with this world of passion.

“ *Var.* Gods ! cruel gods ! take notice I forgive you.

“ *Athen.* Alas ! my lord, my weaker tender sex

“ Has not your manly patience, cannot curb

“ This fury in ; therefore I let it loose ;

“ Spite of my rigid duty I will speak

“ With all the dearness of a dying lover.”

Farewell, most lovely and most lov’d of men——

Why comes this dying paleness o’er thy face ?

Why wander thus thy eyes ? why dost thou bend,

As if the fatal weight of death were on thee ?

Var. Speak yet a little more ; for by the gods,

And as I prize those blessed happy moments,

I swear, oh Athenais ! all is well :

Oh, never better !

Athen. I doubt thee, dear Varanes !

Yet if thou dy’st I shall not long be from thee.

Once more farewell, and take these last embraces.

Oh, I could crush him to my heart ! Farewell ;

And as a dying pledge of my last love

Take this, which all thy prayers could never charm.

What have I done ? Oh ! lead me, lead me, Delia !

Ah, prince, farewell ! angels protect and guard thee !

Var. Turn back, oh, Athenais ! and behold me ;

Hear my last words, and then farewell for ever !

Thou hast undone me more by this confession :
 You say, you swear, you love me more than ever ;
 Yet I must see you married to another :
 Can there be any plague or hell like this !
 Oh Athenais ! whither shall I turn me ?
 You 'ave brought me back to life ; but oh ! what life ?
 To a life more terrible than thousand deaths.
 Like one that had been bury'd in a trance
 With racking starts he wakes, and gazes round,
 Forc'd by despair his whirling limbs to wound,
 " And bellow like a spirit under ground,"
 Still urg'd by fate to turn, to toss and rave,
 Tormented, dash'd, and broken, in the grave.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

ATHENAIS *dress'd in Imperial Robes, and crown'd ; a
 Table with a Bowl of Poison, DELIA attending.*

Athenais.

A MIDNIGHT marriage ! Must I to the temple
 Thus at the murd'rer's hour ? 'Tis wondrous strange !
 But so, thou say'st, my father has commanded,
 And that 's a mighty reason.

Delia. The emp'ror, in compassion to the prince,
 Who would perhaps fly to extravagance
 If he in public should resolve to espouse you,
 Contriv'd by this close marriage to deceive him.

Athen. 'Tis well; retire.

“Go fetch thy lute, and sing those lines I gave thee.”

[*Exit Delia.*

So, now I am alone; yet my soul shakes;

For where this dreadful draught may carry me

The Heavens can only tell; yet I'm resolved

To drink it off in spite of consequence.

Whisper him, oh, some angel! what I'm doing:

By sympathy of soul let him too tremble

To hear my wondrous faith, my wondrous love,

“Whose spirit not content with an ovation

“Of ling'ring fate, with triumph thus resolv'd,

“Thus in the rapid chariot of the soul,

“To mount and dare as never woman dar'd. [*Drinks.*

“'Tis done—haste, Delia, haste—come, bring thy
lute,

“And sing my waftage to immortal joys.

“Methinks I can't but smile at my own bravery:

“Thus from my lowest fortune rais'd to empire,

“Crown'd and adorn'd, worshipp'd by half the earth,

“While a young monarch dies for my embraces,

“Yet now to wave the glories of the world”—

Oh, my Varanes! tho' my birth's unequal,

My virtue sure has richly recompens'd,

And quite outgone example!

SONG.

“Ah, cruel bloody fair!

“What canst thou now do more?”

“ *Alas! 't is all too late*
“ *Philander to restore!*
“ *Why should the heavenly powers persuade*
“ *Poor mortals to believe*
“ *That they guard us here*
“ *And reward us there,*
“ *Yet all our joys deceive?*
“ *Her poignard then she took*
“ *And held it in her hand,*
“ *And with a dying look*
“ *Cry'd, thus I fate command:*
“ *Philander, ah, my love! I come*
“ *To meet thy shade below:*
“ *Ah, I come! she cry'd,*
“ *With a wound so wide*
“ *There needs no second blow.*
“ *In purple waves her blood*
“ *Ran streaming down the floor,*
“ *Unmov'd she saw the flood,*
“ *And bless'd her dying hour:*
“ *Philander! ah Philander! still*
“ *The bleeding Phillis cry'd;*
“ *She wept a while*
“ *And she forc'd a smile,*
“ *Then clos'd her eyes and dy'd.”*

Enter PULCHERIA.

Pulch. How fares my dear Eudisia? Ha! thou
look'st,

Or else the tapers cheat my sight, like one
That's fitter for thy tomb than Cæsar's bed :
A fatal sorrow dims thy shaded eyes,
And in despite of all thy ornaments
Thou seem'st to me the ghost of Athenais.

Athen. And what's the punishment, my dear Pul-
cheria !

What torments are allotted those sad spirits
Who groaning with the burden of despair
No longer will endure the cares of life,
But boldly set themselves at liberty,
“ Thro' the dark caves of death to wander on,
“ Like 'wilder'd travellers without a guide,
“ Eternal rovers in the gloomy maze,
“ Where scarce the twilight of an infant moon,
“ By a faint glimmer check'ring thro' the trees,
“ Reflects to dismal view the walking ghosts,
“ And never hope to reach the blessed fields ?”

Pulch. No more o' that ; Atticus shall resolve thee :
But see, he waits thee from the emperor ;
Thy father too attends.

Enter LEONTINE, ATTICUS, &c.

Leon. Come, Athenais—Ha ! what now, in tears ?
Oh, fall of honour ! but no more, I charge thee,
I charge thee, as thou ever hop'st my blessing
Or fear'st my curse, to banish from thy soul
All thoughts, if possible the memory,
Of that ungrateful prince that has undone thee.
Attend me to the temple on this instant

To make the emp'ror thine, this night to wed him,
“ And lie within his arms.”

Athen. Yes, sir, I'll go——
Let me but dry my eyes and I will go;
Eudasia, this unhappy bride, shall go:
Thus like a victim crown'd and doom'd to bleed,
I'll wait you to the altar, wed the emp'ror,
“ And if he pleases lie within his arms.”

Leon. Thou art my child again.

Athen. But do not, sir, imagine any charms
Or threat'nings shall compel me
Never to think of poor Varanes more:
No, my Varanes I no——
While I have breath I will remember thee;
To thee alone I will my thoughts confine,
And all my meditations shall be thine:
“ The image of my woes my soul shall fill,
“ Fate and my end, and thy remembrance still.
As in some popular shade the nightingale
“ With piercing moans does her lost young bewail,
“ Which the rough hind observing as they lay
“ Warm in their downy nest had stol'n away;
“ But she in mournful sounds does still complain,
“ Sings all the night, tho' all her songs are vain,
“ And still renews her miserable strain.”
Yes, my Varanes I till my death comes on
Shall sad Eudasia thy dear loss bemoan. [Exeunt.

Enter VARANES.

Var. 'Tis night, dead night, and weary nature lies

So fast as if she never were to rise ;
 No breath of wind now whispers thro' the trees,
 No noise at land nor murmur in the seas ;
 “ Lean wolves forget to howl at night's pale noon,
 “ No wakeful dogs bark at the silent moon,
 “ Nor bay the ghosts that glide with horror by
 “ To view the caverns where their bodies lie ;
 “ The ravens perch and no presages give,
 “ Nor to the windows of the dying cleave ;
 “ The owls forget to scream ; no midnight sound
 “ Calls drowsy Echo from the hollow ground ;
 “ In vaults the walking fires extinguish'd lie,
 “ The stars, heaven's sentry, wink, and seem to die : ”
 Such universal silence spreads below,
 Thro' the vast shades where I am doom'd to go,
 Nor shall I need a violence to wound,
 The storm is here that drives me on the ground ;
 Sure means to make the soul and body part,
 A burning fever and a broken heart.
 What, ho, Arantes !

Enter ARANTES.

I sent thee to th' apartment of Athenais—

“ I sent thee,” did I not, “ to be admitted ? ”

Aran. You did, my lord ; but oh !

I fear to give you an account.

Q. Max. Alas,

Arantes ! I am got on t' other side

Of this bad world, and now am past all fear.

Oh, ye avenging gods ! is there a plague

Among your hoarded bolts and heaps of vengeance
Beyond the mighty loss of Athenais?

'Tis contradiction—Speak then, speak Arantes,
For all misfortune, if compar'd with that,
Will make Varanes smile——

Aran. My lord, the Empress
Crown'd and adorn'd with the imperial robes,
At this dead time of night, with silent pomp,
As they design'd from all to keep it secret,
But chiefly sure from you; I say, the empress
Is now conducted by the general,
Atticus, and her father, to the temple,
There to espouse the Emperor Theodosius.

Var. Say'st thou? Is't certain? Ha!

Aran. Most certain, sir. I saw them in procession.

Var. Give me thy sword. Malicious Fate! Oh
Fortune!

Oh giddy Chance! Oh turn of love and greatness!
Marry'd—she has kept her promise now indeed;
And oh! her pointed fame and nice revenge
Have reach'd their end. No, my Arantes, no;
I will not stay the lazy execution
Of a slow fever. Give me thy hand, and swear
By all the love and duty that thou ow'st me,
T'observe the last commands that I shall give thee:
Stir not against my purpose, as thou fear'st
My anger and disdain; nor dare t'oppose me
With troublesome unnecessary formal reasons,
For what my thought has doom'd my hand shall seal.
I charge thee hold it stedfast to my heart,

Fix'd as the fate that throws me on the point.
Tho' I have liv'd a Persian, I will fall
As fair, as fearless, and as full resolv'd,
As any Greek or Roman of them all.

Aran. What you command is terrible, but sacred;
And to atone for this too cruel duty,
My lord, I'll follow you——

Var. I charge thee not;
But when I am dead, take the attending slaves,
And bear me with my blood distilling down
Straight to the temple: lay me, oh, Aranthès!
Lay my cold corse at Athenais' feet,
And say, oh why! why do my eyes run o'er?
Say with my latest gasp I groan'd for pardon.
Just here, my friend; hold fast, and fix the sword;
I feel the art'ry where the lifeblood lies;
It heaves against the point—Now, oh ye gods!
If for the greatly wretched you have room
Prepare my place; for dauntless lo I come:
The force of love thus makes the mortal wound,
And Athenais sends me to the ground. [*Kills himself.*]

SCENE III.

*The outward Part of the Temple. Enter PULCHERIA
and JULIA at one Door, MARCIAN and LUCIUS at
another.*

Pulch. Look, Julia, see the pensive Marcian comes:
“ 'Tis to my wish; I must no longer lose him,

“ Lest he should leave the court indeed. He looks
“ As if some mighty secret work’d within him
“ And labour’d for a vent—Inspire me, woman !
“ That what my soul desires above the world
“ May seem impos’d and forc’d on my affections.

“ *Luc.* I say she loves you, and she stays to hear it
“ From your own mouth—Now, in the name
“ Of all the gods, at once, my lord, why are you silent ?
“ Take heed, sir, mark your opportunity,
“ For if the woman lays it, in your way
“ And you o’ersee it she is lost for ever.

“ *Mar.* Madam, I come to take my eternal leave ;
“ Your doom has banish’d me, and I obey.
“ The court and I shake hands, and now we part,
“ Never to see each other more ; the court
“ Where I was born and bred a gentleman,
“ No more, till your illustrious bounty rais’d me,
“ And drew the earthborn vapour to the clouds :
“ But as the gods ordain’d it I have lost,
“ I know not how, thro’ ignorance, your grace ;
“ And now the exhalation of my glory
“ Is quite consum’d and vanish’d into air.

“ *Pulch.* Proceed, sir.

“ *Mar.* Yet let those gods that doom’d me to dis-
please you

“ Be witnesses how much I honour you——
“ Thus worshipping, I swear by your bright self,
“ I leave this infamous court with more content
“ Than fools and flatt’ers seek it ; but, oh Heaven !
“ I cannot go if still your hate pursues me !

“ Yes, I declare it is impossible

“ To go to banishment without your pardon.

“ *Pulch.* You have it, Marcian : is there ought beside

“ That you would speak, for I am free to hear.

“ *Mar.* Since I shall never see you more, what hinders

“ But my last words should here protest the truth :

“ Know then, imperial princess, matchless woman !

“ Since first you cast your eyes upon my meanness,

“ Ev’n, till you rais’d me to my envi’d height,

“ I have in secret lov’d you—

“ *Pulch.* Is this Marcian !

“ *Mar.* You frown, but I am still prepar’d for all :

“ I say I lov’d you, and I love you still,

“ More than my life, and equal to my glory.

“ Methinks the warring spirit that inspires

“ This frame, the very genius of old Rome,

“ That makes me talk without the fear of death,

“ And drives my daring soul to acts of honour,

“ Flames in your eyes ; our thoughts too are akin

“ Ambitious, fierce, and burn alike for glory.

“ Now, by the gods, I lov’d you in your fury

“ In all the thunder that quite riv’d my hopes ;

“ I lov’d you most ev’n when you did destroy me.

“ Madam, I’ve spoke my heart, and could say more,

“ But that I see it grieves you ; your high blood

“ Frets at the arrogance and saucy pride

“ Of this bold vagabond—May the gods forgive me—

“ Farewell—a worthier general may succeed me,

“ But none more faithful to the emperor’s interest

“ Than him you’re pleas’d to call the traitor Marcian.

“ *Pulch.* Come back; you’ve subtilly play’d your
part indeed;

“ For first, the emperor, whom you lately school’d,
“ Restores you your commission; next commands you,
“ As you’re a subject, not to leave the court:
“ Next, but, oh Heaven! which way shall I express
“ His cruel pleasure! he that is so mild
“ In all things else, yet obstinate in this,
“ Spite of my tears, my birth, and my disdain,
“ Commands me, as I dread his high displeasure,
“ Oh, Marcian! to receive you as my husband.

“ *Mar.* Ha, Lucius! what does my fate intend?

“ *Luc.* Pursue her, sir; ’t is as I said: she yields,
“ And rages that you follow her no faster.

“ *Pulch.* Is then, at last, my great authority
“ And my intrusted power declin’d to this?
“ Yet, oh my fate! what way can I avoid it?
“ He charg’d me straight to wait him to the temple,
“ And there resolve, oh, Marcian! on this marriage
“ Now, gen’rous soldier, as you’re truly noble,
“ Oh, help me forth, lost in this labyrinth;
“ Help me to loose this more than Gordian knot,
“ And make me and yourself for ever happy.

“ *Mar.* Madam, I’ll speak as briefly as I can,
“ And as a soldier ought: the only way
“ To help this knot is yet to tie it faster.
“ Since then the emperor has resolv’d you mine,
“ For which I will for ever thank the gods,
“ And make this holiday throughout my life,
“ I take him at his word, and claim his promise;

" The empire of the world shall not redeem you.
 " Nay, weep not, madam ; tho' my outside's rough,
 " Yet by those eyes your soldier has a heart
 " Compassionate and tender as a virgin's ;
 " Ev'n now it bleeds to see those falling sorrows ;
 " Perhaps this grief may move the emperor
 " To a repentance : come then to the trial,
 " For by my arms, my life, and dearer honour,
 " If you go back when given me by his hand,
 " In distant wars my fate I will deplore,
 " And Marcian's name shall ne'er be heard of more."

SCENE IV.

The Temple. THEODOSIUS, ATHENAIS—ATTICUS
joining their hands—MARCIAN, PULCHERIA, LU-
 CIUS, JULIA, DELIA, &c. LEONTINE.

Attic. *The more than Gordian knot is ty'd,
 Which Death's strong arm shall ne'er divide,
 For when to bliss ye wafted are,
 Your spirits shall be wedded there :
 Waters are lost and fires will die,
 But love alone can fate defy.*

Enter ARANTHES with the body of VARANES.

Aran. Where is the empress ? where shall I find
 Eudisia ?

By fate I'm sent to tell that cruel beauty
 She has robb'd the world of fame : her eyes have given
 A blast to the big blossom of the war ;

Behold him there nipp'd in his flow'ry morn,
Compell'd to break his promise of a day,
A day that conquest would have made her boast:
Behold her laurel wither'd to the root,
Canker'd and kill'd by Athenais' scorn.

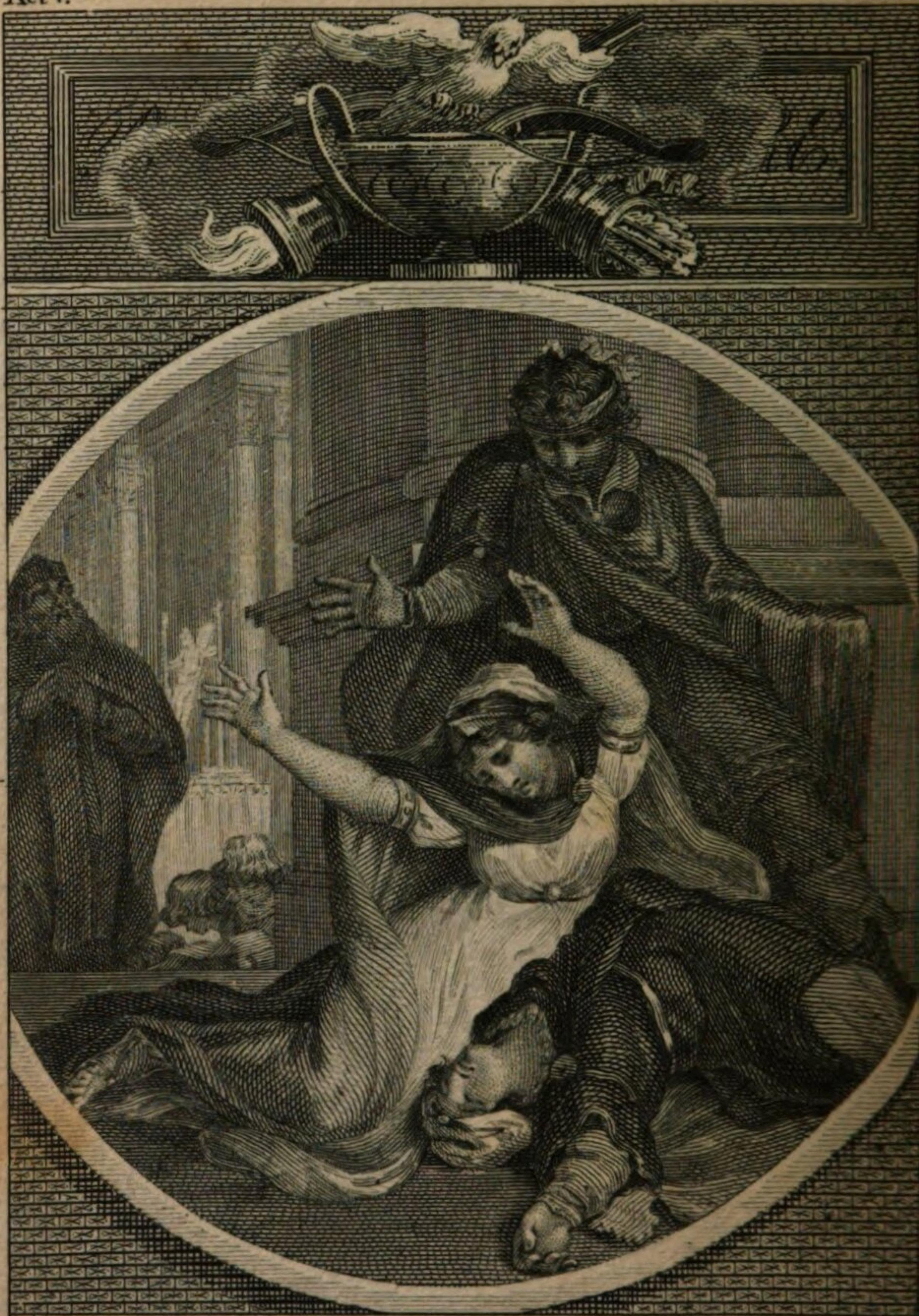
Athen. Dead, dead, Varanes!

Theo. "Oh, ye eternal powers
" That guide the world! why do you shock our reason
" With acts like these, that lay our thoughts in dust?
" Forgive me, Heaven, this start, or elevate
" Imagination more, and make it nothing."

Alas, alas, Varanes! But speak, Arantes,
The manner of his fate. "Groans choke my words—
" But speak, and we will answer thee with tears."

Aran. His fever would, no doubt, by this have done
What some few minutes past his sword perform'd.
He heard from me your progress to the temple,
How you design'd at midnight to deceive him
By a clandestine marriage: but my lord,
Had you beheld his racks at my relation,
Or had you empress seen him in those torments,
When from his dying eyes swol'n to the brim
The big round drops roll'd down his manly face,
When from his hollow'd breast a murm'ring crowd
Of groans rush'd forth, and echo'd all is well;
Then had you seen him, oh ye cruel gods!
Rush on the sword I held against his breast,
And dye it to the hilt with these last words—
Bear me to Athenais—

Athen. Give me way my lord;
I have most strictly kept my promise with you:



THE OEDIPUS.

Athenias.

*on his cold bloody breast
Thus let me breathe my last.*

Burney del

Thornthwaite sculp.

London. Printed for J. Bell British Library, Strand, March 23, 1793.

I am your bride, and you can ask no more :
Or if you did I'm past the power to give—
But here, oh here ! on his cold bloody breast
Thus let me breathe my last.

Theo. Oh, empress ! what, what can this transport
mean ?

Are these our nuptials, these my promis'd joys ?

Athen. Forgive me, sir, this last respect I pay
These sad remains—and oh, thou mighty spirit !
If yet thou art not mingled with the stars,
Look down and hear the wretched Athenais,
When thou shalt know before I gave consent
To this indecent marriage, I had taken
Into my veins a cold and deadly draught,
“ Which soon would render me, alas ! unfit
“ For the warm joys of an imperial lover,
“ And make me ever thine, yet keep my word
“ With Theodosius,” wilt thou not forgive me ?

Theo. Poison'd, to free thee from the Emperor !
Oh, Athenais ! thou has done a deed
That tears my heart ! What have I done against thee
“ That thou should'st brand me thus with infamy
“ And everlasting shame ? thou might'st have made
“ Thy choice without this cruel act of death :
“ I left thee to thy will, and in requital
“ Thou hast murder'd all my fame.”

Athen. Oh, pardon me !
I lay my dying body at your feet,
And beg, my lord, with my last sighs intreat you,
T'impute the fault, if 't is a fault, to love,

And the ingratitude of Athenais,
To her too cruel stars. Remember, too,
I begg'd you would not let me see the prince,
Presaging what has happen'd; yet my word
As to our nuptials was inviolable.

Theo. Hal she is going!—"see her languishing eyes
"Draw in their beams!" the sleep of death is on her.

Athen. "Farewell, my lord." Alas, alas, Varanes!
T' embrace thee now is not immodesty,
Or if it were, I think my bleeding heart
Would make me criminal in death to clasp thee,
"Break all the tender niceties of honour
"To fold thee thus, and warm thee into life,
"For oh, what man like him could woman move!"
Oh, prince belov'd! oh, spirit most divine!
Thus by my death I give thee all my love,
And seal my soul and body ever thine—— [Dies.

Theo. Oh, Marcian! oh, Pulcheria! did not the Power
Whom we adore plant all his thunderbolts
Against self-murd'ers, I would perish too;
But as I am I swear to leave the empire.
To thee, my sister, I bequeath the world,
And yet a gift more great, the gallant Marcian:
On then, my friend, now shew thy Roman spirit!
As to her sex fair Athenais was
Be thou of thine a pattern of true honour:
Thus we'll atone for all the present crimes,
That yet it may be said in aftertimes,
No age with such examples could compare,
So great, so good, so virtuous, and so fair. [Exeunt.

EPILOGUE.

THRICE happy they that never wrote before;
How pleas'd and bold they quit the safer shore!
Like some new captain of the city bands,
That with big looks in Finsbury commands,
Swell'd with huge ale he cries, Beat, beat the drum;
Pox o' the French king! Uds-bud! let him come;
Give me ten thousand red-coats and alloo!
We'll firke his Crequi and his Conde too.
Thus the young scribblers mankind's sense disdain,
For ignorance is sure to make 'em vain;
But far from vanity or dang'rous pride
Our cautious Poet courts you to his side;
For why should you be scorn'd, to whom are due
All the good days that ever authors knew?
If ever gay, 'tis you that make 'em fine;
The pit and boxes make the poet dine,
And he scarce drinks but of the critic's wine.
Old writers should not for vain-glory strive,
But like old mistresses think how to thrive;
Be fond of ev'ry thing their keepers say,
At least till they can live without a play;
Like one who knows the trade and has been bit,
She dotes and fawns upon her wealthy cit,
And swears she loves him merely for his wit.

*Another, more untaught than a Walloon,
Antic and ugly, like an old baboon,
She swears is an accomplish'd beau-garçon;
Turns with all winds, and sails with all desires;
All hearts in city, town, and court, she fires,
Young callow lords, lean knights, and driv'ling squires.
She in resistless flatt'ry finds her ends,
Gives thanks for fools, and makes ye all her friends.
So should wise poets sooth an aukward age,
For they are prostitutes upon the stage.
To stand on points were foolish and ill-bred
As for a lady to be nice in bed;
Your wills alone must their performance measure,
And you may turn 'em ev'ry way for pleasure.*



Lee, Nathaniel,

Theodosius Tragedy

London 1793

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